

**THE EFFECT OF SELF-EFFICACY ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE
SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL**

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Parent involvement has been shown to be integral to student achievement. Yet, this involvement appears to decline as children progress through school. One reason for this may be that parents do not believe they have the capability to help their children with their work. It may be that self-efficacy correlates with parent involvement. This dissertation investigates whether self-efficacy is correlated with parent involvement and takes note of what role parent socioeconomic status may play in this relation. Using conceptual frameworks of self-efficacy from Albert Bandura (1977) and parent involvement from Joyce Epstein (1995), the research not only sought a correlation between self-efficacy and parent involvement, but also identified which types of activities parents are involved in at the secondary level.

Parents participating in the study responded to a mixed methods survey asking them about their level of self-efficacy and the types of parent involvement activities in which they ipate. The survey consisted of 15 closed and three open-ended questions, giving parents the opportunity to describe their involvement and needs from the school. Composite variables for self-efficacy and parent involvement, along with dichotomous SES variables, were used for ANCOVA testing. Tests showed no correlation among composites, though T-Tests of self-efficacy and dichotomous parent

involvement indicators showed a relationship between self-efficacy and owning a computer. Research also showed parent involvement takes place mainly in the areas of basic parenting, communication, and learning at home activities. Parents noted that there was a lack of forums for shared governance opportunities. Parent responses suggest degree and frequency of involvement is influenced by responses and needs of student. Responses show parent involvement remains stable and that parents would benefit from support from schools to help facilitate involvement.

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PREFACE

I want to thank all of the people who have helped me in this process. Without their insight, suggestions, and guidance this work would not have been possible. I would like to recognize and express my gratitude for the support and encouragement I received from the faculty, staff and fellow students at the University of Pittsburgh. I would like to thank my parents, Douglas and Carolyn Peiffer, who set me on the path. This work is dedicated to the two loves of my life- Emilia and Elena- thank you for all of your support, patience, and flexibility.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this section, the definitions and potential benefits of both parental involvement and self-efficacy are provided. The topic and objectives of the study are introduced and described. An overview of three parent involvement theories is included. This section also discusses self-efficacy and the role it may play in influencing parents to become involved with their children's learning. For the benefit of the reader, key terms are defined.

This study addresses the issue of parent's self-efficacy with their children's learning at the secondary level. The study seeks to determine whether there is an association between a parent's level of self-efficacy with learning activities and parent involvement with school at the secondary level. The implication is that the more self-efficacy a parent has, the more involved the parent may be with his or her child's school. Self-efficacy may be defined as the extent to which people believe they may establish and master performance of a task as way to attain a goal (Bandura, 1977). This study examines parents' own self-efficacy perceptions to see whether those perceptions may influence their decisions to become involved with their children's education. Research suggests that parents who have a strong and positive sense of their own abilities and capabilities to help their children with learning tend to be more active with school (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Conversely, parents who have a weak and negative sense of their abilities tend to be uninvolved with their children's education

(Lahart, Kelly, & Tangney, 2009). If involved parents impart a positive influence on their children's school experience, it seems that educators may need to find ways to engage parents and to involve them as partners at the secondary level. This is especially important, as research shows that parental involvement tends to decline as the child progresses through school (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Helping parents develop confidence in their ability to help their teen-age children with high school assignments may be one way to reverse that decline.

This study reflects the ongoing frustrations many high school principals have felt with hosting parent involvement nights and having few parents attend. This lack of attendance often occurs regardless of the topic or incentives provided for parents to attend. The study seeks to discover why parents may choose to attend these events and to find out what can be done to increase their attendance and subsequent involvement with their children's learning. Table 1 shows key terms used in this study:

Table 1: Key Terms

Goal Attainment Theory	Theory that people are motivated to set target performance goals for themselves and then benchmark their progress in reaching target
General Self-efficacy	An overall sense of confidence in one's ability to master a range of activities and challenges
Parental Engagement	Parents actively participate in learning activities that support their child's education both at home and at school
Parental Involvement	Traditional parent engagement with schools which supports the teacher and is at direction of school
School Centric	Traditional school parental volunteer activities in which the focus of the activity is to support the school and teacher, not necessarily to meet the needs of the parent or child
Self-efficacy	Belief in one's own abilities and knowledge base to accomplish a task
Specific Self-efficacy	A belief that one is able to master an individual task and build confidence in that one area

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to determine whether the association between parental self-efficacy and involvement with school exists and whether that association is positive or negative. The study also seeks to determine the strength of that association through the use of tests of statistical significance. From the examination of the resulting data, I hope to draw inferences on how the recognition of an association between these variables may help educators to develop parent involvement policies. For this study, parents of tenth grade students are examined, because they represent a group of students who are fully immersed in the secondary program. This research also seeks to establish future paths of study that may build upon the data gathered from this research.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether parents at the secondary level believe they have a strong sense of self-efficacy regarding learning. Determining the extent to which the parents believe they have a strong sense of self-efficacy in learning at the secondary level can help educators determine what experiences the parent had as either a student themselves or a parent that affected their development of this sense. Using a modified self-efficacy scale response in a survey, researchers can determine what elements influenced the development of parental self-efficacy (Zulkosky, 2009). Researchers can then correlate this sense of self-efficacy with types of involvement activities in which parents engage and with contextual factors that may influence parents. In this way, elements of self-efficacy theory may be associated with research done by of Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, and Eccles and Harold. Results from the study can help educators to devise parent involvement programs that may provide parents with the opportunities to improve their self-efficacy through mastering parent engagement tasks.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions that this study addresses are:

1. How do parents perceive their own self-efficacy to work with their children on their learning at the secondary level?
2. What types of parental involvement activities do parents engage in at the secondary level?
3. Does a parent's degree of self-efficacy with secondary learning activities vary with that parent's socioeconomic status?
4. What do parents want educators to do to help them improve their self-efficacy with helping their children with learning activities?

1.2.1 Research Method

This research utilizes a self-administered survey to gather data. Closed and open-ended questions are used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. Using both quantitative and qualitative data in the study will enable the gathering of more in-depth information on the phenomenon being studied. Using both closed and open-ended questions on the survey will allow the respondents an opportunity to provide more thick description about their levels of self-efficacy and parent involvement. Respondents will be able to express their ideas and perceptions more with the inclusion of open-ended questions than they could have with closed-ended questions alone.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study seeks to investigate whether there is a correlation between a strong sense of self-efficacy with learning at the secondary level and with an increased frequency of parental involvement at that level. Positing that low self-efficacy with student learning at the secondary level may result in a lack of parent involvement at that level, the study hopes to determine the relationship between high self-efficacy and more frequent parent involvement with learning at the secondary level. Having parents involved with students and learning at all levels may provide the additional support children need to be successful in school. Given that parental involvement with learning tends to decline as their children progress through secondary grades (Simon, 2001) it may be beneficial for educators to learn what factors may help to increase that involvement or at least prevent it from declining. In order to understand this phenomenon better, it may be useful to determine how parents themselves may view their involvement with learning activities at the secondary level. Being able to determine an association between parent involvement and strong self-efficacy may help educators to refine parent involvement practices to focus on improving parental self-efficacy with learning.

Parents who are involved with their children's learning may help influence them to do well at school. Research suggests that students who have parents who are involved with them in their learning tend to exhibit positive school behaviors such as better attendance, improved grades, and higher graduation rates (Catsambis, 2001; Epstein, 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These students also tend to take more challenging courses and seem to be able to conform to school expectations of proper behavior (Harris, Andrew-Power, & Goodall, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These students may receive encouragement from their parents when they struggle and may

receive tutorial help from them that allows them to overcome academic obstacles in school. Jeynes (2010) notes that children who perform well at school have parents who expect them to do so. Research also suggests that students who have involved parents tend to be able to overcome hurdles such as poverty and bad neighborhoods in their attainment of educational goals (Jeynes, 2010; Lareau, 1987; Seegan, Welsh, Plunkett, Merten, & Sands, 2012).

Parental involvement may also ameliorate effects of low socioeconomic status that may be detrimental to the student (Seegan et al., 2012). It may help children to develop the resiliency to overcome the adverse effects of poverty and allow them to be able to develop and set goals for themselves.

Though both parents and teachers may deem parent involvement important, both groups do not always define it in the same way. Many educators tend to view parent involvement as something parents can do to help them in class or as something not integral to daily instruction (Lawson, 2003; Weis, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). Past research has suggested that teachers desire parental involvement only if that involvement can be directed by the schools to the parents (Becker & Epstein, 1982). In the past, parent involvement activities have often been dictated to them by the school to support the teacher's activities in the classroom. Whether chaperoning school events, serving as classroom helper, or reading stories to children, teachers tended to view parent involvement activities as those actions that support them directly (Lawson, 2003). Traditional parent involvement activities conform to this model. Teachers tended not to view parent involvement as what they can do to support the parents at home with their children. Often, teachers and parents had differing views of what actions comprise parent involvement with learning (Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Becker & Epstein, 1982; Crozier & Davies, 2005). This view fails to acknowledge whole categories of parental involvement that

occur at home and in school and the contributions parental involvement has on children's learning. Parent involvement in these areas may be underutilized and unappreciated by teachers (Becker & Epstein, 1982). As a result, teachers may have a narrow and outdated view of what activities constitute parent involvement and what they may be able to do to help foster that involvement.

Parent involvement occurs in many places and at many times. Several factors influencing parent involvement include personal characteristics of the child within the context of the family, parental role construction, and the degree of self-efficacy parents have with their ability to help their children succeed in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parent involvement can be overt, with parents taking on concrete activities designed to help their children succeed with schoolwork or school activities. It can also be visible in the influence demonstrated using parental social class and networks to help children succeed in school. This influence may be operationalized through providing children with social skills needed to negotiate school bureaucratic practices or to use social class to try to influence student course selection and track placement within schools (Kelly, 2004). Parent involvement may also be subtle, with parental expectations and communication of expectations to children having a lasting influence on children's academics. Unlike overt behavior that is easily observed, subtle parent involvement is difficult to measure as it takes place out of the purview of the educator (Jeynes, 2010).

1.4 PARENT INVOLVEMENT THEORIES

There are several theories about what activities constitute parent involvement and describe how that involvement influences student achievement. Joyce Epstein was one of the first researchers

to identify and categorize several types of parental involvement. Her research led her to categorize parental involvement into six types: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, shared decision-making, and collaborating with the community. This section gives a brief introduction to parent involvement models described by Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, and Eccles and Harold.

Unlike the school-centric view promoted in traditional types of parental involvement, Epstein recognizes that there are several types of parenting behavior that influence a student's learning that take place outside of the classroom and during all times of the day. Epstein's typology recognizes the importance of basic parenting skills in relation to a child's development and learning. Epstein's typology features a variety of parental involvement activities. Parents may not have to master one activity before moving on to the next one in order to engage with their child in learning. Some parents may practice some but not all of the parental activities depicted in the model. While Epstein's typology of parental involvement is not sequential, it would seem that a parent would have to be competent in basic parenting skills before he or she could become involved with such activities as community collaboration. Basic parenting skills, which may include such things as providing basic necessities for children, setting expectations for success, setting priorities, and establishing rules tend to form the foundation for all other parenting behavior (Epstein, 1995). A parent may need to develop a sense of his or her confidence in having the ability to be a good parent in order for the parent to be able to expand their involvement into other areas in a child's life.

Parental involvement may also be a series of choices parents make to become involved in their children's learning. In their model of parental involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) focused on those things that influence parents to choose particular types of involvement.

Parents may choose specific involvement activities in response to the specific type of knowledge and skill they have, the time they have to devote to the activity and whether they have asked to become involved by either their child or their child's school. Other factors that influence whether parents become involved may include the parent's motivational beliefs, role construction, and perceptions of involvement from others and self-perceived life context. Like Epstein, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler acknowledged that parent involvement occurs both at home and at school. This acknowledgement stresses the belief that parent involvement is multifaceted, occurring beyond the traditional school day. The degree to which this involvement takes place, however, is largely dependent upon the degree of the parent's perceptions of how they should become involved. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), the degree of parental involvement, along with the characteristics of the child, influence the child's learning.

Eccles and Harold (1993) noted the importance of the characteristics of the parent in their decision to become involved. While Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler stressed the factors that motivate the parents to choose to become involved with their children's learning, Eccles and Harold (1993) stress the importance of characteristics already inherent in the family that affect whether they get involved with their child's learning. These characteristics include such things and the social and psychological resources available to the parent, the parents' perceptions of their child, characteristics of the child and the parents' attitudes about school. The neighborhood and experiences of the parent with school also affects the type and degree of parental involvement the parents provide. Eccles and Harold (1993) depicted parental involvement as the interplay between exterior and interior perceptions and influences regarding their beliefs about whether and how they should be involved with their child's education. For Eccles and Harold, parent involvement is

partly a response to this interplay and their perceptions of the school, their children, and themselves.

All three parental involvement models describe some element of parental involvement, whether that involvement is represented by a typology of behaviors, a description of motivating factors, or a listing of characteristics that influence that involvement. The models depict parental involvement as a variety of activities that take on several different forms over different periods. They all stress the ability of the parent to take action independent of the school and within their own terms. This is a departure from older forms of parental involvement proscribed by the school. Parental involvement with children's learning can take place anywhere at any time. It does not occur in a vacuum, but in tandem with other forces that shape children's development. Epstein (2005) noted that continual interaction between parental involvement practices, community experiences, and school procedures and expectations help to shape how children develop. Parent perceptions of their own abilities to work within these factors may account for what motivates them to engage with their children in learning. Though there may be many forms of parent involvement, parent perceptions of what types of involvement may be the most effective with adolescent children may suffer from conflicting norms from these different areas. As such, parents may feel that they have little to contribute to their children's education as their children move forward into secondary school. Parents may also lack the social capital to know how to work with the school and find out how to become involved with their children's learning. The degree to which a parent believes he or she knows how the school works or what to say to teachers to express their desires for their children may also influence the parent's perception of self-efficacy.

1.4.1 The Need to Improve Parent Self-efficacy

Parent perceptions of their capability to engage with their children at the secondary level are integral to the parent deciding to become involved. Parents with a low self-perceived efficacy regarding their ability to help their children at the secondary level are more likely to let the school determine how they will be involved than parents with a high self-perceived efficacy (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Lahart et al., 2009). This low self-efficacy seems to be more common with working class or poor parents than with middle class parents. Since research suggests that parent involvement is associated with positive academic performance and behavior, it may be to the benefit of the schools to find ways to increase that involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

Bandura (1977) noted that a high sense of self-efficacy can have such positive effects on people so that they are more likely to take on a difficult task, persist with that task until the task is complete, and put forth the effort needed to be successful. A positive sense of perceived self-efficacy can help a parent persist in the face of challenges. It may also help the parent to overcome negative influences associated with bad neighborhoods and low socioeconomic status (Seegan et al., 2012; Zulkosky, 2009). A strong sense of self-efficacy can help a parent find ways to work with their child beyond the traditional parent involvement activities typically demanded of them by schools. Research also suggests that when a parent has a strong sense of self-efficacy, the child may also develop a strong sense of self-efficacy. The child observes what the parent does and will absorb those behaviors and approaches that are associated with a strong sense of self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Given the positive effect that a strong sense of parental self-efficacy may have on their ability to work with their child, educators may want to find ways to help parents develop that sense

of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) noted the best way for people to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy is to develop it through their personal experience of mastering a goal or a task. The types of tasks or goals that people may have mastered may differ by their socioeconomic status. Working class or impoverished parents may not have had the same opportunity or success in mastering academic tasks as children than their middle and upper class counterparts. This lack of experience may result in a diminished sense of social capital, which may in turn, affect their ability to engage with their child's learning and teachers.

Self-efficacy best develops in people when they master tasks that challenge their abilities. Self-efficacy can also be developed through the observation of someone similar to the observer accomplishing a task. Verbal persuasion may also play a role in the development of self-efficacy, as people may need to be encouraged to complete a task or accomplish a goal. Important to this process is that the person seeking to improve his or her self-efficacy has a positive mindset and be willing to take on new tasks. This positive mindset may be the most crucial aspect of this development (Bandura, 1977). Integral to the development of self-efficacy is the relationship people see between their actions and the results of those actions (Bandura, 1989). In order for the four means of self-efficacy development to be effective, people must be able to visualize themselves accomplishing a task and must then plan accordingly. This visualization can motivate people to act to master a task, building their self-efficacy related to that task as a result.

Research suggests that integrating the four elements of self-efficacy development can help parents develop their own self-efficacy. The four components consist of task mastery, modeling, verbal persuasion, and having a positive mind set (Bandura, 1977, Lane & Lane, 2001). This parent involvement plan could combine elements of goal attainment theory and establish smaller, attainable goals to be benchmarks to measure progress toward a larger goal. Inherent in goal

attainment is that the activities challenge the parent at a level just beyond the parent's comfort level (Locke & Latham, 2002). This challenge will result in the parent strengthening old skills and developing new ones that can be used to help improve their abilities as parents. This will also help to strengthen the parent's belief in his or her own abilities. It may be that having strong parenting abilities means little if the parents do not believe that they have strong parenting abilities (Coleman & Karraker, 1997).

Schools developing programs to help parents develop their own self-efficacy have to gauge the importance of the parents' perceptions of their abilities. The perceptions could be used as starting points in program development. Educators must be careful, however, not to place too much emphasis on the parents' self-perceptions, as there may be instances where parents have a false sense of their own abilities and thus have a false sense of their self-efficacy (Lahart et al., 2009). To help parents develop their sense of self-efficacy, they need to understand their own perceptions of their competencies as parents. With the help of the school, the parents can then begin to develop and improve their own sense of self-efficacy with learning. Schools could develop programs that clearly define the task that the parents are to master, the means by which they will be evaluated, examples of outstanding parental involvement activities, and the opportunity to meet other parents who have been effective engaging with their children and the school in learning (Lane & Lane, 2001). Bloomfield and Kendall (2012) suggested that these parent involvement programs be assessed based on how the parents meet the objectives outlined in the program. With clear outcomes in mind and a means to measure them, educators can strive to develop parent engagement programs that may help to develop parenting competencies and self-efficacy. This improvement may lead to increased parental involvement with the schools as a result.

This research explores the extent to which parental perceived self-efficacy with their own ability to help their children complete learning tasks at the secondary level influences their willingness to become involved with those tasks. For this study, parent involvement is portrayed through the lens of Joyce Epstein's (1986) development of a typology for parental involvement. The typology includes a variety of behaviors that both directly and indirectly influence the child's academic success. These activities also take place in a wide variety of places, extending the traditional parental involvement model to activities that take place beyond the confines of the school. It is also of interest to learn whether Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) assertion that the type of parental engagement may vary by the child's grade and maturity as well as the degree of a parents' self-efficacy with helping their child learn at the secondary level is evidenced in this study. A survey that measures the degree of parental self-efficacy and the types of parental engagement activities will provide data to help educators determine if there is a relationship between the degree of self-efficacy and the type of activities a parent may participate in. This will enable them to develop parent outreach programs to help improve their self-efficacy with learning activities as a way to increase the level of their involvement.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Research has associated positive student academic results with parents who are engaged with their learning. These results are both quantitative, as recorded in higher grades and graduation rates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) and qualitative, as noted by research observing how students absorb parental expectations and behaviors regarding education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

While the engagement behaviors may differ as children mature, these behaviors continue to influence the child's behavior as the child grows. Unfortunately, parents tend to be less involved at the secondary level (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Though the children are adolescents, the teenage years may be vulnerable ones for them in which the continued support and guidance of the parents may be even more critical in their development and success than when they were toddlers. This would suggest that educators may desire sustained parental involvement with adolescent children as a means to improve student achievement. In this era of high stakes testing accountability, educators cannot afford to ignore any potential means that may help students achieve success. Increasing parental self-efficacy as a means to increase parental involvement is one tool that educators may have at their disposal.

Parental self-efficacy with student learning may vary with the parents' socioeconomic status. This belief may affect the type of parental involvement in which the parents participate. Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) observed that parents from a lower socioeconomic background tend to participate more often with learning activities that take place at home rather than school. Because these activities take place at home and often unobserved, it may be difficult to determine which types of learning activities the parents favor and how effective their participation is in helping the student improve his or her learning.

Some educators may argue that at the secondary level, students should be more independent and develop their own sense of responsibility and reliability. There may also be some parents who become involved with school only to undermine the teacher or challenge a grade they do not like. Despite these potential negative instances, the positive effects of engaged parents at the secondary level suggest that having engaged parents with a strong sense of their own self-

efficacy would outweigh the risks of negative interactions (Eccles & Harold, 1993, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Understanding how parents perceive and develop their own sense of self-efficacy at the secondary level may be the key to improving parent engagement programs and developing positive parent partnerships with the school. Because these partnerships, if properly implemented, can have a positive effect on student achievement, finding ways to establish them for the benefit of the children may be a vital enterprise for the public schools to be viable and responsible to the needs of the families they serve. The insight gained from this research on parental perceived self-efficacy will enable educators to design parent involvement policies and develop those partnerships at the secondary level in order to help improve parental engagement with student learning.

2.0 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines literature involving the topics of parental involvement and parental self-efficacy in helping their children learn. The chapter also examines how self-efficacy may be developed and how that self-efficacy influences the degree to which parents engage in parent involvement activities with student learning at the secondary level. This chapter analyzes key facets of parental involvement, noting its various forms and why that involvement may affect student learning. Parental involvement may also have a reciprocal effect on self-efficacy in that it may build parents' sense of confidence in their ability to help with learning tasks (See Figure 1).

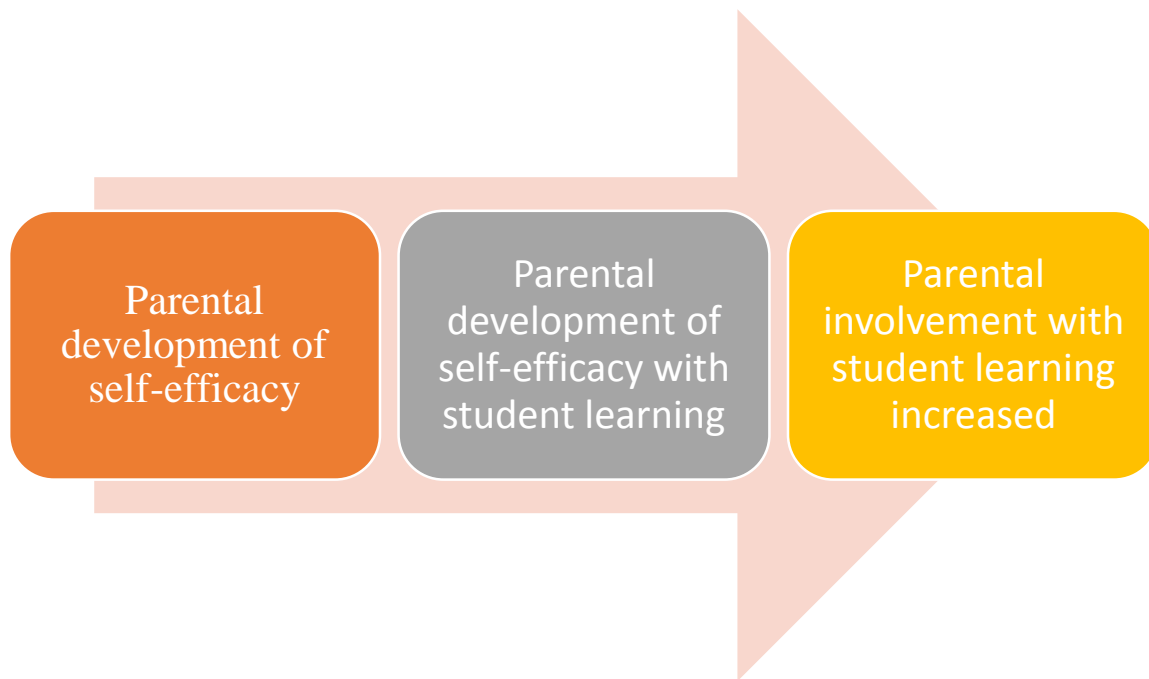


Figure 1. Anticipated relationship of self-efficacy to parental involvement.

This study examines research in self-efficacy and parental involvement theories to postulate how these concepts may motivate and even help promote parental involvement at the secondary level. The intent of this chapter is to support and add to the larger repository of research on these topics in addition to establishing a conceptual lens for which people may view these topics regarding education and parental involvement.

2.1 PARENT INVOLVEMENT WITH LEARNING

This section will examine the topic of parental involvement, noting how that term may be interpreted and how self-efficacy affects parents engaging with their children in learning. Different types of parenting activities will be discussed as well influences that affect this involvement. Research has associated parental involvement with student achievement in learning (Harris, Andrew-Power, & Goodall, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002, Stevenson & Baker, 1987). This achievement may be measured by several areas of student improvement including graduation rates, standardized test scores, improved attendance, and enrollment in and completion of challenging academic classes. In their literature review of 74 research studies Shute, Hansen, Underwood, and Razzouk (2011) noted that the research suggested that there are consistent associations between student academic achievement and parental involvement activities such as parent participation with parent-teacher organizations, parent-teacher communication, parent checking of student homework, home supervision, and reading at home. These associations would seem to suggest that parental involvement with learning may be seen as a resource for teachers to use with student learning. As such, it may be beneficial for teachers to learn not only which types

of parental involvement with learning may be the most useful for students but also which factors may motivate parents to become involved with their children's learning in the first place.

2.1.1 Parent Involvement With School

Educators try to increase parental involvement with school, particularly at the secondary level where such involvement traditionally has declined (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Sanders & Epstein, 1998; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Increased parent involvement with school has been an integral component of government efforts to reform school in the past. It has been prominently featured in educational legislation goals such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Goals 2000, and No Child Left Behind of 2001 (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Kochanek, Wraight, Wan, Nylén, and Rodriguez (2011) noted that 91% of all school improvement plans completed in response to NCLB requirements include at least one activity that actively engages parents in the school reform process. Research also suggested that parental involvement may have a positive effect on a student's school engagement and performance (Mo & Singh, 2008). Rather than being something stressed solely at the elementary levels, parent involvement should be something that occurs at all levels of a child's schooling. It is something that could be cultivated and encouraged for all parents from Pre-K to 12th grade (Catsambis, 2001). When the relationship with the school is ongoing, adolescents react positively (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane, 2007). Though adolescents want to be more independent, they often welcome their parent's involvement with school, even if that involvement is less direct with them now than it was when they were younger (Epstein, 1995; Green, Walker,

Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2005). Parents may still have a profound influence on how their children learn and view school when they are in high school.

Despite the importance assigned to parent involvement by both the government and researchers, some dispute its overall effect on student achievement. Fishel and Ramirez (2005) observed that it is difficult to determine which types of parent activities have any type of effect on student achievement. Fan and Chen (1999) noted that there was almost no correlation between parent involvement and student achievement. Research also suggested that some traditional forms of parental involvement such as parental volunteering in the classroom have little impact on how well a student will perform academically (Epstein, 1986). There is little empirical data to suggest that parent involvement greatly affects either student grades or behavior (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002). Indeed, it may be possible for students to succeed in school without any parent support at all.

The inconsistency between studies that suggest parental involvement at the secondary level may have a positive effect on student academic success and studies that suggest parental involvement plays an insignificant role may result from the manner in which parents are involved at the secondary level. Catsambis (2001) observed that parental involvement at the secondary level may result from parents responding to communication from teachers about their child's behavioral, attendance, or academic problems. This type of parental involvement often occurs at school, is observable and easily recorded. Parents of successful students may demonstrate forms of parental involvement that positively affects student academic performance but is less observable and not easily recorded because they may take place outside of school. These parenting behaviors may include parents providing positive encouragement, setting high expectations, and discussing schoolwork with their children (Catsambis, 2001; Easton, 2010).

Reynolds (1992) noted that it may be difficult to establish a relationship between parental involvement with student academic success because parental involvement is difficult to define. Complicating the issue of determining a causal effect of parent involvement and student academic achievement, Fishel and Ramirez (2005) asserted that there are no methodologically sound studies on parent involvement to suggest which specific types of activities that will help improve a child's academic performance. It may be difficult to specify types of parental involvement activities with specific grade performance, though parents may positively affect student achievement by the totality of their actions in support of their children.

Parental involvement and parental engagement consist of many types of behaviors that affect the student and the teacher. Parental involvement takes place within different spaces and times. It may differ due to the developmental needs of the child. These behaviors do not exist in isolation but are part of the context of overarching parental involvement models and theories. To understand how parental involvement may affect students, parents, and school, one must understand how it operates in the context of school and community. Joyce Epstein developed one of the most discussed parental involvement models.

Parental involvement may be multidimensional over time and affected by the personalities of both the parent and the child (Bempechat, 1992). It may be strong in one area or activity and weak in another. The strength of the relationship between the child and the parent may also affect the degree to which parental involvement influences student academic performance.

The effects of parent involvement on student achievement may build over time. Kelly (2004) noted the effect of parent involvement on a child accrues over the course of that child's academic career. Parent influence is not static, but develops as the child develops. Developing a strong parent involvement program may be seen as an investment in the student. The more a

teacher may do to cultivate that involvement, the more the involvement may help to improve student-learning outcomes. It may be that the true value of increased parental involvement is not possible to be evaluated during a child's tenure as a student but only afterwards when its effects can be measured against the grades, behavior, and attendance of the child who benefitted from that involvement.

In addition to parent involvement, there may be other influences motivating students to succeed in school or to take on other behaviors. Some of these influencing factors may vary in importance as the child grows, particularly at the adolescent stage. Parental involvement may not even be the most important influence on the child, but it is probably one of the most consistent due to its duration (Epstein, 1987). Educators may want to view parental involvement as a long-term process that may be utilized to help students succeed in a K-12 format.

Despite some counter claims that question the value of parental involvement on students' learning, other research associates a positive correlation between parent involvement and educational success. Catsambis (2001) suggests that parental involvement influences student academics and is a better predictor of future academic success than mere tests alone. Research associates an increased level of parental involvement with positively affecting a student's grades, attendance, behavior, course completion, and graduation rates (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Harris et al., 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Weiss et al., 2010; Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

Because there are various types of parental involvement, a question remains as to how to define it. There are different definitions for parental involvement that have been designed by different researchers. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) described parent involvement as the parent's reservation of materials for education for their child's learning. Becker and Epstein

(1982) described parental involvement as a “strategy to increase the educational effectiveness of the time parents and children spend with one another at home” (p. 85). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) defined parent involvement as consisting of “home-based activities related to child’s learning in school” (p. 6). Reynolds (1992) noted “parent involvement should refer to any interactions between the parent and child that may contribute to the child’s development” (p. 442.) Bower and Griffin (2011) observed that “traditional definitions of parent involvement make demands of the parent to help facilitate the success of the school, while reciprocal demands are not made of the school to ensure the success of their families” (p. 78). From these definitions, it seems that parental involvement is often viewed in the context of the parents’ relationship with the school and the ability of the child to be successful in it. The variation among definitions seems to relate to which activities constitute that involvement.

Many types of parental engagement take place at home, away from the school. Researchers may not be able to observe this engagement and must rely on the word of the parents themselves. Because parents may not correctly report on the frequency or type of activities that they are doing with their children, they may not accurately report on the type or frequency of activities in which they participate. This reliance on the parents’ self- reporting may create some validity and reliability concerns among researchers and affect their conclusions. As a result, it may be difficult to accurately measure types of parental involvement.

2.2 PARENT INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

Traditionally, parent involvement has been viewed as parents participating in activities that directly support the teacher in the classroom. These activities often took place in the classroom and during the school day (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). In the sense that this type of parental involvement takes place in the school to support the teacher, parents may perceive it as being a type of involvement that is more focused on the needs of the teacher and less focused on the needs of the students. It may be beneficial therefore for educators to consider what activities parents participate in with their children around learning and what may motivate parents to become involved with their children's learning in the first place. This section analyzes these two components of parental involvement: activities engaged in by the parents and motivating factors for parental participation.

2.2.1 Parent Involvement Models

In 1986, Joyce Epstein conducted research to examine how parents react to teacher attempts to involve them with learning. Epstein surveyed parents of 1,259 parents of elementary students. She asked parents to describe their participation in 12 types of learning activities. Ninety percent of the parents who completed the survey were female. Epstein's survey was cross sectional and utilized regression techniques of analysis. Epstein acknowledged that the cross sectional nature of the survey prevents it from making conclusions about causal relationships between parental involvement and student achievement. Joyce Epstein primarily examined the actions parents take in supporting their child's learning in and out of school. Epstein described parent involvement as

constituting a wide range of parental behaviors. She created a typology to describe six different types of parenting behavior categories. These categories are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community (Epstein, 1987, 1995). Each category acknowledges the importance of a particular type of parent involvement, noting its effect on the child. The categories recognize the variety of actions that parents undertake to support their children and their children's learning as well (See Table 2).

Table 2: *Joyce L. Epstein's Typology of Parent Involvement*

Parenting	Communicating	Volunteering	Learning at home	Shared decision making	Collaboration with community
Help all families establish home environments that support children as students	Design effective forms of school to home and home to school communication, a two-way communication forum	Recruit and organize parent help and support in the classroom	Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities	Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives	Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development
Examples Support home conditions that are conducive to learning, provide for child's needs of food, health, basic parenting skills	Examples Conferences with parents, work folders, use of multi forms of communication, use of language translator if parent needs it, clear information distribution to parents on school policies and programs	Examples School and classroom volunteer programs, family center or room in school, establish avenues for parents to communicate with each other, parent training on how to work with students in school setting	Examples Information for families on skills required for students at all subject and grade level, information on homework policies and how to help with homework, provisions of math, reading, and science activities, summer learning activities	Examples Active PTA/PTO participation, active participation in advisory committee, Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform, district level councils, information on school elections,	Examples Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support and other services, Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents

Note. Adapted from School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share Author(s): Joyce L. Epstein Reviewed work(s): Source: The Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 76, No. 9 (May, 1995), pp. 701-712.

The primary parental involvement activity recognized by Epstein (1986) is the act of parenting itself. In this category, Epstein noted that basic parenting activities have to take place to meet the basic needs of the child in order for the child to function at school. In her study, Epstein (1986) noted that 97% of the parents provided school supplies and 90% of them also reported that their child had a regular place to do homework. Epstein also acknowledged the substantive things parents do to provide the necessities such as a safe environment to come home to, food and clothing, and expectations for academic success. If the child knows he or she has a safe and secure home, which will provide for his or her basic needs such as shelter, clothing, and food, the child may be able to focus more on learning when at school than on meeting those needs.

Means of communication make the second category of Epstein's typology. In Epstein's 1986 study, most parents reported that communication from the school was often informational in nature, with the school providing parents with such information as schedules, grades, emergency procedures, and notices about special events. Epstein (1986) reported that 60% of her parents surveyed reported that they never spoke with their child's teacher. However, this same study suggested that parents tend to follow teacher suggestions and help when teachers ask them. This suggests the positive benefits the teacher may accrue when he or she talks to the parents and suggests ways the parent can help with learning.

In order to help a child perform in school, Epstein (1987) noted that it is important to establish effective lines of communication between the home and the school; that two-way communication between the home and the school is necessary to increase the frequency of contact. She also stressed the importance of having several avenues of communication open to the parent to increase their ability to provide input to the school. Epstein stressed the importance of utilizing a variety of formats to communicate, based on the parent's ability to access a particular channel of

communication. Communication is not merely an avenue for the teacher to inform the parent of school rules and procedures, it is also a means for the parent to provide input regarding the needs of his or her child. Parents may view two-way communication between the teacher and the home as a form of respect, as it suggests that the relationship between the two is not one in which the teacher dictates and dominates.

Volunteering is also a form of communication, as it involves the parents physically meeting teachers, other parents, and students. It is the third category of Epstein's typology. Epstein (1986) acknowledged the value of parents coming to school to help in the classroom or participate in the school in some activity. Epstein (1986) noted that while the parents who did become involved with class spent 4.1 days helping the teacher, only 4% of the parents surveyed were very active, spending over 25 days per year at the school. Further, 42% of the parents were not active in school because they worked outside of the home during school hours (Epstein, 1986). Educators may be able to encourage parents to volunteer at the school by providing a welcoming environment for the parents. A welcoming environment may help the parents feel invited into the school and that they are valued. This invitation may also make the school seem like less of an imposing institution and more of a community resource. The key idea here is that the parent becomes a presence in the school. This may help to break down barriers between the school and the home. Catsambis (2001) also noted that when parents volunteer in school, it gives them knowledge of the school and other activities which they can then use to help their children succeed academically and move on to additional schooling after graduation.

Parental involvement does not just take place at school; it also takes place at home. Learning at home is the fourth category on Epstein's (1986) typology. Of all the parenting categories that affect education, learning at home could have the greatest impact on the child's

academic success (Epstein, 1986). In this category, the parent actively engages with the child on school activities and lessons. The parent can reinforce learning from school or enrich a child's skills by expanding upon learning that took place. Learning at home implies that the parent and child work together on schoolwork and set academic goals. In this sense, the parent and child engage each other. Learning becomes a partnership between the parent and the child, and the child sees the parent as providing support by providing help with the homework and taking an interest in the child's schooling.

With the concept of forming a true partnership between the parent and the school, Epstein stresses the importance of decision-making role for the parent regarding classroom activities and school procedures. Decision-making forms the fifth category in Epstein's typology. Epstein (1987) described a process where parents are actively involved in decisions that occur in the school. This decision-making goes beyond things such as how the parent can volunteer for a class activity or what types of snacks to bring in for the children. Decision-making, in order to truly engage parents and make them partners in education, has to involve practices and policies that have a real impact on what is taking place in the classroom. Involving parents in more meaningful decision-making policies would provide them with the opportunity to have their voices heard on the creation of policies that directly affect their children. This would also help them to build their own self-efficacy as decision-makers by allowing them to be part of a process that results in an improved practice. They would be able to have some ownership in some decisions made that have a direct impact on their children. This is something valued by parents and may increase their participation in school.

It is not a long leap from the idea of increased parent decision-making to increased parent collaboration with the community. Epstein's (1995) sixth and last category involves the parent

collaborating with the community. When parents begin to have a role in decisions made in school, they develop agency for their children. This agency can then extend beyond the school to the community. In this category, parents network with each other and community stakeholders to find resources and programs that can help the children at school. They take on advocacy for all of the children in the school, not just their own son or daughter. In this category, the parent utilizes his or her social capital to find resources and possibly create new learning opportunities for the children at the school.

Joyce Epstein's model depicts the parent as an active agent supporting his or her child in many different types of behaviors that may occur in many different places. All of these activities support both child and school. Because some of these behaviors may take place outside of the classroom, educators may not recognize them as such (Anderson & Minke, 2007, Bower & Griffin, 2011). Because of this, some parent involvement activities may go unnoticed. As such, educators miss opportunities to work with parents as they engage with their children at home.

By describing different types of parental involvement and ways that this involvement may manifest itself, Joyce Epstein provided educators with a new way to view parental involvement. Her categories describe a variety of activities, each one having a role to play in a child's success with learning. Parents may have different comfort levels participating in these activities. This comfort level may stem from their level of confidence in their own knowledge and competencies with these activities. This comfort level may be influenced by a parent's prior experience in participating with a particular activity or belief in their ability to be successful in that activity. In this sense, it may be that the parent's degree of self-efficacy may influence which, if any, of the parenting activities described by Epstein is undertaken by the parent.

By recognizing that parental involvement is a multidimensional activity, Joyce Epstein was able to help researcher and educators realize that it is more pervasive and influential in a child's learning than may have previously been recognized. Epstein expanded people's concepts of what actions constitute parental involvement; taking it beyond traditional views of parental involvement that recognized parental involvement as taking place only within the brick and mortar confines of the school.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) provided another parent involvement model. While Epstein describes specific parenting activities, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler identified those things that motivate and influence the parent's decision to become involved with their child's learning. This helps to identify not only why parents would choose to become involved with their children's learning but also notes what influences which types of involvement the parent would undertake. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) devised their model after conducting a literature review on parent involvement. They concluded that parent involvement stems from a combination of motivating factors that include the parent's role construction, specific invitations to participate in school sent from the child or teacher, specific skill levels and competencies they possess, and whether the involvement does not overtax their available time and energy. Parents may also decide to become involved with learning activities because they have a strong sense of self-efficacy in their ability to help their child to succeed and to stick with a challenging task. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) concluded that it is critical for a parent to have a personal sense of self-efficacy with learning combined with parental role-construction in order to even have a possibility of that parent engaging in learning activities.

Analyzing the components of parental role construction, parental self-efficacy, and specific invitations from the child, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted that a parent's sense of self-

efficacy in combination with the parent's belief in the role they play with educating their children helps to determine whether a parent will decide to engage with their children in learning activities. Through modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction, parents are able to exert their influence on their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). How the child perceives these behaviors is critical as to whether the behaviors affect the child's academics.

In revisiting Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's original hypothesis, Green et al. (2007) surveyed 853 parents of first through sixth grade public school children from a mid-southern urban school in the United States in a cross sectional study. Parents were surveyed at two different points in time and time intervals. Cross-validation analysis was used to determine that parents from both samples were from the same population. A Likert scale measured items that encourage parents to become involved with their children's learning. The scale noted how frequently parents reported their participation with learning activities (Green et al., 2007). Using multiple hierarchical regressions, Green et al. (2007) were able to test the whether their hypothesis of a parent's role construction, self-efficacy, specific teacher and child invitations, and parental time and energy predicted whether the parent would be likely to become involved with their children's learning. The research indicated that parental self-efficacy beliefs were positive predictors of home-based involvement for parents. The research also noted that parents who did not feel that they had the skills and knowledge to help their children with learning were more likely to reach out to the school for help (Green et al., 2007).

Parenting involvement with education does not occur in a vacuum but in concert with things taught at school. To be effective, parenting behaviors that are intended to help students succeed academically should also align with the expectations of the school about how parents can

be involved with their children and be developmentally appropriate for the child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

A parent decides on a form of involvement to take based on what the child asks him or her to do and the parent's level of competency with the request. The parent's perceived level of competency influences the decision to become involved as well. Once started, the parent has to have confidence in his or her ability to complete an activity. The amount of time that the parents can dedicate to the activity also influences a parent's decision to become involved, as does whether or not the child or the school invites the parent to participate. Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, and Hoover-Dempsey (2005) revised Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's 1995 parent involvement model to investigate parental motivation for involvement with their child's learning. Figure 2 depicts Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's revised parent involvement model.

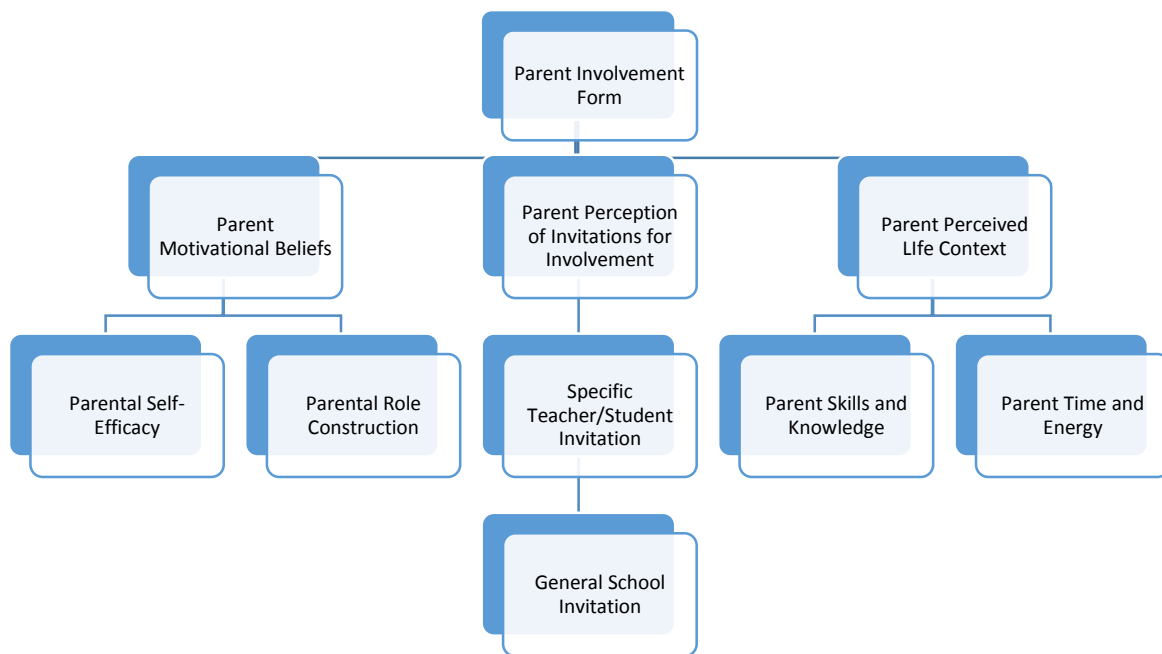


Figure 2. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler revised parent involvement model.

Research suggests that parental perceptions of their own educational self-efficacy, life context, and invitations to become involved at the school may affect their decision to become involved with a child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, Walker et al., 2005). These factors may have different influences on that decision depending on the parents' own life context, calling into question any direct causation of one item or another becoming the deciding factor for involvement. Research suggests that parents will select types of activities consistent with their own perceptions of the specific skills and knowledge they can apply to those activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). These perceptions may be influenced by the personal experiences the parents have had with these activities which in turn may be influenced by opportunities available to them in the context of their socioeconomic background. This life context may influence the level of self-efficacy the parent has with learning (Barton et al., 2004, Lareau, 1987).

Parent involvement is not static. It may contain multiple degrees of involvement, depending on the several idiosyncratic and contextual factors. Eccles and Harold (1993) described parent involvement as a fluid process which is "both an outcome of parent, teacher, and child influences and as a predictor for child outcomes" (p. 570). Eccles and Harold designed a model of parent involvement that outlines what factors influence parents' motivation and ability to engage with their children in learning.

Eccles and Harold based their model on a literature review of parent involvement research. In their model, Eccles and Harold identify five key factors that influence parental perspective on their child's education and their determination to become involved in that education. These factors are the characteristics of the parents and family, the neighborhood, the characteristics of the child, the characteristics of the teacher, and the characteristics of the school (Eccles & Harold, 1993) (See Figure 3).

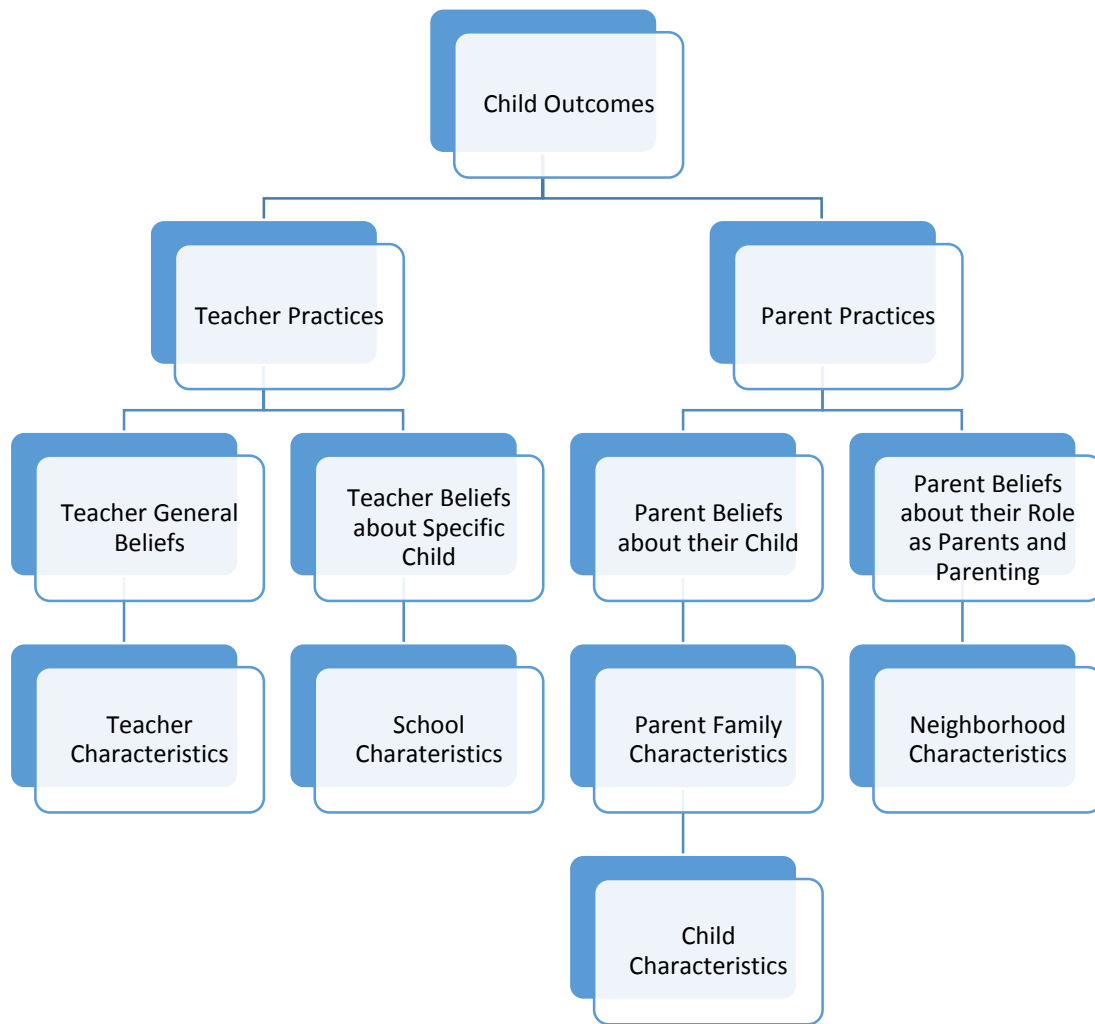


Figure 3. Eccles and Harold parent involvement model.

Eccles and Harold (1993) presumed that the five categories of child, parent, neighborhood, teacher, and school characteristics influence all the other stages in the parent involvement model. Regarding the characteristics of parents, the efficacy beliefs of parents are an important determinant of parent involvement. Eccles and Harold noted that parental efficacy consists of a parent's confidence that he or she can help their child with homework and their belief that they can influence their children's education. Eccles and Harold also noted that this efficacy tends to

wane as children enter high school. As the model notes, parent practices is a key component affecting the academic success of children. Integral to parent practices is their belief of their own self-efficacy with effectively helping their children learn. Maintaining strong parental self-efficacy beliefs regarding learning may be integral to maintaining a high level of parent involvement throughout a child's school career.

Eccles and Harold's (1993) model treats parent involvement as both an outcome of these characteristics and a predictor of how the child will perform in school. Parental involvement takes place within the larger context of human relationships and socioeconomic realities. The degree of parental involvement may vary with parents depending on a combination of their sense of role construction and their level of self-efficacy with learning. The model not only depicts those items influence parental involvement but also suggests that a deficiency in these areas may serve as an impediment to that involvement. Eccles and Harold (1993) suggested in their model that educators have the capability to increase parental involvement through facilitating activities designed to help parents improve their parenting skills and competencies, as well as helping them to redefine their role as parents.

While parental involvement may refer to specific activities parents do to help their children succeed in learning, it may also take place within the context of the parents and child's personal situations. It may take into account such characteristics of both parent and child as age of the child, education of the parent, income level of the family, and context wherein the involvement takes place. Parental context of socioeconomic background and location may also affect parent involvement. Barton et al. (2004) described parent involvement as a process that takes place in specific socially defined spaces where people come together for a common purpose. It is a "dynamic, interactive process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to

define their interactions with schools and among school actors” (Barton et al., 2004, p. 3). These experiences may have been good or bad, as such they may influence how parents view their teachers or the school. If the experiences were positive, they may encourage parental involvement. However, if they were bad, they may discourage. Parental involvement may hinge on whether they perceive that the school welcomes and encourages them to participate in their children’s education (Eccles & Harold, 1993, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Barton et al. (2004) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study using case study methods. The study involved bi-weekly conversation groups, in-depth interviews, and observations with parents in a high poverty, urban elementary school in a southern central city in the U.S. Based on this research, they devised a model of parental involvement in which involvement is defined as a relational phenomenon that relies on activity networks. In their model of parent involvement, described as the “Ecologies of Parental Engagement” (EPE), parent involvement is a flexible process that changes with specific actions taken within a culturally defined space within the school (Barton et al., 2004). The space partly determines the form the parent involvement will take. Parent engagement is a shared process between the teacher and the parent within that space. Parents and teachers bring their own experiences, resources, and social networks to that space, which influences the type of parent involvement that takes place. Parent engagement mediates between the space and capital people have. Parents refer to their experiences and knowledge to establish their relationship with the school. In this sense, the parents are not passive recipients of school policy but are creators of their own involvement practices and guidelines (Barton et al., 2004). In the EPE framework, parental engagement involves how parents develop their understanding of what particular avenues of engagement are open to them under what circumstances. This understanding may help to develop their self-efficacy with working with the

school and student learning. A more developed sense of self-efficacy may help parents to develop relationships with teachers and other parents. These relationships help parents to form social networks, upon which parents may rely to help them engage with the school and their children in learning.

In the EPE model, parent engagement is a process that evolves depending upon what space and resources are available to the parent and how the parent can then use those resources with the people who are working together to educate his or her child. Parental engagement then becomes a reflection of whether a parent understands how to adapt to diverse situations and use their social networks and resources to help their children succeed (See Figure 4).

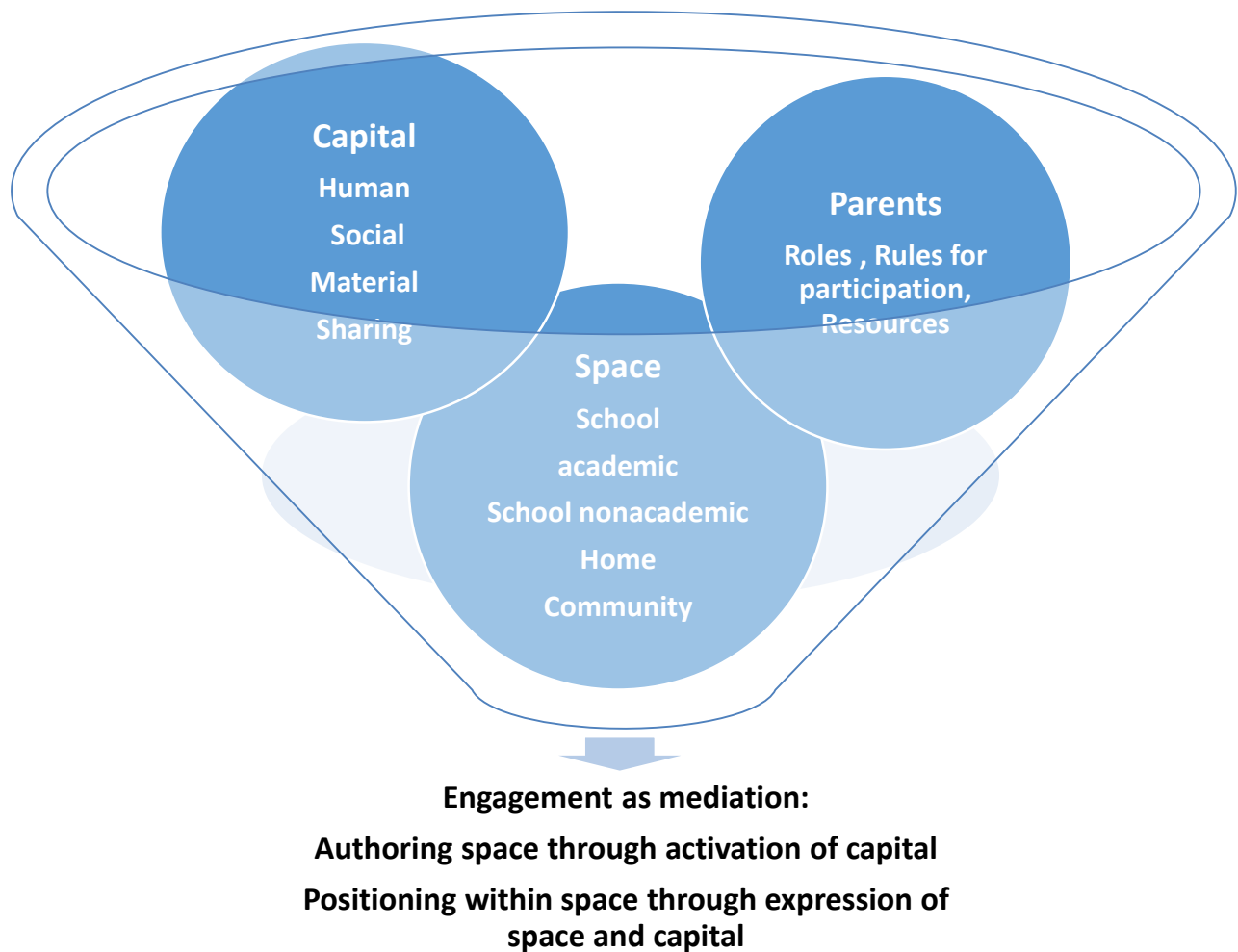


Figure 4. Ecologies of parental engagement model.

As indicated from the parent models outlined above, parental involvement can take many forms and has many contexts. Each model focuses on a specific form or characteristic of parental involvement: forms of parental involvement, factors that motivate parents to act, characteristics of the parent, child, school, neighborhood, and teacher, and a conscious utilization of parent involvement activities based on specific social capital and parameters of space. All of these models suggest that parental involvement is complex. Woven throughout these models is the concept that parental self-efficacy with learning affects the type, degree, and willingness to become involved

with their children's education. It may be inferred that helping parents to develop and strengthen their sense of self-efficacy with learning may be crucial to increasing parent involvement with school.

2.3 PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

While there may be different definitions and models for parental involvement, educators may note that parent involvement takes place within the context of the student's socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial background. Students may come into the same school with different cultural and socioeconomic class backgrounds. This implies that students may bring different norms and values to school than those of their teachers. This can lead to the teacher misinterpreting some gestures and behaviors of the students, which can then lead to that teacher making inferences about the students' home life. Impoverished students and their families may be especially susceptible to this misperception, as they may have the least power and opportunity to advocate for their children. Kelly (2004) noted children internalize the expectations set for them by their parents about school performance. This internalization may also incorporate social class distinctions. If the expectation for student performance links negatively to social class, the student may operate from a deficit outlook of his or her own capabilities if he or she associates their social class with expected low academic performance. Teachers with little experience with impoverished families may not truly understand the difficulties that these people experience to participate in even simple school involvement activities and may interpret these behaviors as their not being interested in their children's education (Gonzalez & Thomas, 2011; Lareau, 1987). In most cases, however, parents coming from impoverished backgrounds do care about their child's education every bit as much

as parents coming from wealthier backgrounds (Barton et al., 2004, Epstein, 1986; Simon, 2001). Problems between home and school may arise if educators are insensitive to the particular needs these families face as they find ways to meet the needs of the child. As the country increasingly becomes more multicultural and the income divide grows, what were once considered norms of school behavior may change. The ethnic makeup of students may become more diverse while the poverty level of those students may increase. These socioeconomic factors may influence how children develop. Research suggests that families benefit when educators are more responsive to families in relation to their socioeconomic and cultural needs (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Epstein, 1995; Lareau, 1987).

Educators may once have seen their role in child development as a compartmentalized action that took place separate from influences coming first from the home, then the neighborhood. It may be, however, that the influence of the home, neighborhood, and school all affect a child's development simultaneously (Sanders & Epstein, 1998). Epstein (2010) described parental involvement as one of three overlapping spheres of influence that affect a child's education: schools, families, and communities. These influences constantly affect a child as he or she grows. The spheres are interrelated. Each one depends on the other to assume responsibility for the relationship to maintain the interaction between the three. The interaction among these spheres affect the quality of the education and the level of support a child receives. This interaction may be different for each child, depending upon that child's circumstances. The school becomes a point of focus for these spheres since it is where all components come together. This convergence influences how the message of proper behavior and academic expectations is communicated to the children (Epstein, 2010).

How students receive and perceive expectations for behavior from parents may influence whether they assume these expectations for themselves. Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) suggested that the degree of parent involvement affects whether a student views school favorably or not. The term “school coherence” referenced by Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor incorporates student perceptions about school as well as whether they find the school meaningful. Research suggests a positive correlation with the degree of a child’s school coherence and the level of academic achievement the child attains. Parental interaction with the student helps develop school coherence and protects the child from possible negative influences from the neighborhood (Beining, 2011; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). School coherence acts as a buffer, helping the child to focus on work that needs to be done in class and not on outside issues.

Though parental engagement with the school may vary based on the expectations and norms of the parents’ ethnic and cultural subgroup, other factors may also influence the degree to which parents participate in their children’s learning. Barriers to parent involvement may develop. Eccles and Harold (1993) delineated these barriers as time constraints, parents’ feelings of inadequacy to help, and lack of resources. Impoverished parents who are working multiple jobs often are not able to find time during the day to go to school to volunteer or participate in other activities. They often are unable to pay someone to watch their children if they are not home. Many of these parents do not have a way to get to school. These parents often lack the resources to help them develop a working relationship with the teachers and administration. For them, school may seem irrelevant to their lives and situations (Parret & Budge, 2012).

Time and resource constraints afflict parents of all ethnic groups. In their study on African-American parents, Williams and Sanchez (2012) noted that working parents whose children attend

inner city schools may be extremely pressed for time due to demands of the job and/or having multiple children to care for. Some parents may also perceive that the school does not want them to be involved. This perception can arise from cultural differences and their own past experiences. If the parents had negative experiences with the school as students, they may also have developed negative expectations for how the school will respond to them as parents. African-American parents may also become uninvolved with the school if they feel that their initial contact with the school did not produce any results that they felt were in their best interest or met their concerns (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Recognizing these concerns might help educators develop programs that are culturally sensitive to the needs of the communities they serve.

There may be components of parent involvement for African-American and impoverished families that do not conform to the models promulgated by Epstein and others. Bower and Griffin (2011) suggested that traditional forms of parent involvement may not be effective with minority parents or parents in poverty. Parents in poverty have increased challenges of a lack of transportation and lack of resources that affect their ability to become involved with the school. These parents also seem to lack the social capital to network with each other to determine how they can work with the school to help their children succeed (Crozier & Davies, 2005). Parents in high poverty situations may have also had bad experiences with the school when they themselves were students, which may make them less likely to desire to become involved with the school. To increase parental involvement with minority parents and parents in poverty, Bower and Griffin (2011) advocated that the schools take steps to be culturally sensitive to the individual needs of the families. They stress that educators find ways for parents to increase their ability to help their children, and to help them find ways to network together to become advocates for their children (p. 84).

2.4 PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND THE AGE OF THE STUDENT

In addition to the context in which parental involvement takes place, a student's age also plays a factor in the types and degree of involvement that a parent undertakes with a student (Catsambis, 2001; Easton, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). The years of adolescence, from 12 to 19, are a time of both physical and social changes. Adolescents are fraught with ideas of becoming young men and women, becoming independent, and developing their own identities that are separate from their parents. Traditionally, parental involvement during adolescence tends to decline (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Sanders & Epstein, 1998). Rather than their parents, their peers greatly influence their decisions (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003).

As children go through this phase, they may spend many more hours at school than at home, as they become involved in many school-based activities. Teens are receptive to a wide range of influences as they begin to develop their identities. Schools can take on a larger role for adolescents in helping them find that identity. The adults that adolescents encounter in school may provide them with behavioral models and supports. These supports could take place in tandem with parenting practices at home. Teachers may become role models for the students. Educators can help mediate the effects of cultural influences on adolescents by providing a channel for developmentally appropriate activities that can assist teens develop emotionally and intellectually (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Ideally, there should be a fit between school and parenting practices, so that the adolescent sees how they support each other (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). The perception of the child as to the alignment of these practices with school affects whether the child will utilize them to his or her benefit. These perceptions may change as the child grows.

Parental involvement may vary depending upon the child's age and grade level. Not all types of parental involvement may be appropriate for all students at all grade levels. For adolescents, some forms of parental involvement may not have the same effect for them as they may have for younger students. Younger children may need frequent and direct involvement from the parents to help them do well. At the elementary level, frequent communication between the parents and the school may be associated with academic success. At the secondary level, this type of involvement may not have the same effect. Simon (2001) reported that frequent parental communication with the school at the secondary level is not associated with academic success. This may be because the parents communicating with the school are doing so in response to problems their children are having at school, such as attendance, academic, or behavioral issues. Ho and Willms (1996) suggested that an increase in communication from the school with a disruptive student may be associated with a decrease in communication with that student and his or her own parents. School communication may actually increase at a time when parent involvement may be declining. Researchers may want to study how parental engagement with a disruptive child at home is associated with the child's academic performance. It would seem that because researchers have not done much research on parental involvement at home with disruptive students, the data on parental involvement at the secondary level may skew toward recognizing only parental involvement activities that take place during school time.

2.4.1 Effective Parent Involvement Practices at the Secondary Level

For adolescents, the subtle aspects of parent involvement may have a bigger influence on their performance than overt forms of parent involvement (Jeynes, 2010). As adolescents seek to

develop their identity, they may resent parental involvement that they view as too controlling. They may believe that their parents are undermining them or are too smothering (Catsambis, 2001). If so, they may push back against direct forms of parent involvement. However, it may not be necessary for parents to hover over their adolescent children. Indirect parental involvement activities such as the communication of academic expectations and the modeling of desired behavior by parents may suffice to positively affect academic achievement by the adolescent (Jeynes, 2010). Indirect parent involvement includes such things as discussing schoolwork, providing support and encouragement, and creating an atmosphere conducive to learning at home (DePlanty et al., 2007). Parental support of the child in school affects the child in that the child absorbs the parent's perceptions as to what he or she can achieve. These perceptions have a great effect on how the child gauges his or her own ability; regardless of the actual work the child produces (Bempechat, 1992). Easton (2010) found that frequent communication between the children and their parents was the one type of parent involvement that was the most associated with academic achievement. Anguiano (2004) found that parent involvement at the secondary level influenced whether a student completed high school or not. Evidence of effective parent involvement with school at the secondary level expresses itself not only in test scores, but also in the types of courses in which the students enroll and complete an increase in the daily attendance of the students, and whether the student graduates (Henderson & Mapp, 2001).

By far, the one area of parent involvement that seems to have the biggest effect on the adolescent's academic success is the establishment of high academic and behavioral expectations for the student by the parent (Easton, 2010). Students perceive this support, whether the parent communicates it directly or indirectly. Their perceptions of the parent's efforts, and how those

efforts align with the practices of the school, help to determine if the parent's involvement has had the desired effect on the student's academic progress.

For their part, parents respond to specific invitations and suggestions from the school regarding how to become involved with their children. When educators communicate with the parents and treat them as partners, so that they are engaging with the parents for the improvement of the child, the parents tend to respond. Specific invitations from teachers may provide parents with the opportunity to not only become involved with school but to do so by a specific type of response to the invitation (Walker et al., 2005).

Epstein (1987) noted when teachers asked parents to address a particular area of concern and the parents did so, the students improved upon that area. Being asked to participate by the teacher in a respectful manner goes a long way to forming and maintaining positive relationships with parents and increasing parent involvement at the secondary level (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Ferlazzo, 2011; Harris et al., 2009). Parents need to feel welcomed by the teacher and respected by the school in order for them to want to become involved with the school. They need to feel that teachers hear and respond to their concerns. If they do not believe that the teachers respond to their concerns, they may be reluctant to become involved with the school (Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

2.4.2 Potential Benefits of Parent Involvement at the Secondary Level

Understanding the positive potential that parental involvement may have on student achievement and the many forms that parental involvement may take may be integral for educators to comprehend if they are to implement a successful school program. Commensurate with that

comprehension is the acknowledgement that a strong sense of self-efficacy with student learning may encourage and sustain parent involvement with their children's education throughout their scholastic career. Further, it helps to recognize that this self-efficacy is malleable and can develop through programs designed to help parents improve their skills and competencies with learning.

It may be incumbent upon the educators to take leadership roles in developing parent involvement programs that not only recognize the forms of parental involvement but also the role self-efficacy plays in motivating parents to become involved. Epstein (1986) described a progression for parental involvement that takes the path of the parent setting high expectations for student success that includes engaging with the student on schoolwork at the elementary level. This engagement creates a positive experience for the child. The child may then develop an interest in the school subject and may be motivated to spend more time doing schoolwork. This increased motivation may then lead to the child expending more effort on that work. The extra effort and motivation on class work then translate into higher grades. In this sense, parents who possess a strong sense of their own self-efficacy with learning may be able to help their children develop their own sense of self-efficacy with learning through the actions of modeling effective learning behaviors, directly instructing their children, and reinforcing positive learning behaviors (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Mo and Singh (2008) suggested that parents who are very involved with their children motivate them to spend more time on work, increasing their knowledge and skill level. Going through this process, by the time the child is a teenager, the child may have developed excellent study skills and may experience academic success as a result.

Educators could also familiarize themselves with the potential benefits increased parental involvement may have on their students' academic performance. Teachers may have more opportunities to engage parents with learning than they realize and that they can help increase

parent involvement at their school (Harris, Andrew-Power & Goodall, 2009). Educators may also realize that parental involvement can take many forms and may occur at home as well as at school. Recognizing that it may be beneficial to both parent and education that an alignment form between instructional practices at school with the home life of the child, educators have the ability to develop avenues to collaborate with parents that go beyond the traditional parent involvement activities (Epstein, 1995). New forms of parental involvement that emphasize the contribution of the parent and the community to the education of the child may be developed. These collaborative efforts can help to increase the degree of parental involvement while addressing the needs of the child. Through this collaboration, teachers and parents can work together to increase the parent's ability to be able to help his or her child succeed academically and prepare for life in the 21st century.

2.5 PARENT INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

Research suggests that parental involvement can have a positive effect on student learning and performance at all levels of learning (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Beining, 2011; Catsambis, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001). As such, ensuring that parent involvement can be maintained throughout a student's career may be desired by educators to help students succeed. Despite the benefit of this parental involvement, studies have also shown that the level and degree of this involvement tends to decline as students enter the secondary grades (Epstein, 1995; Gewertz, 2008; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Several barriers may inhibit parental involvement at the secondary level and these barriers may vary among parents by race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Parental lack of confidence in their own abilities to help their child at the secondary level may also inhibit

their willingness to become involved. Parents and teachers may not recognize that there are several different ways to engage parents with student learning and that schools can develop ways to develop parental involvement programs that recognize the value of parent involvement. Primary among these ways may be to focus on ways to improve parental self-efficacy with learning at the secondary level.

2.6 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EFFICACY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Self-efficacy, the belief that one has the skills and competencies to master a task, may be integral to anyone developing the ability and drive to take on new challenges and to become involved with different tasks. In this section, I examine the concept of self-efficacy and how it may be applied to parental involvement. My question is to what degree having a strong sense of self-efficacy in one's ability to succeed with a task motivates one to take on new tasks. For this study, the question becomes what role does a strong sense of strong self-efficacy play in how parents become involved with their adolescent child's learning.

2.6.1 A Description of Self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy is a key component in the theory of social cognition theory. The Encyclopedia of Epidemiology (Boslaugh, 2008) described social cognition theory as an interaction between environment, behavior, and thought. These interactions affect each other at different degrees, depending upon the individual. It is how the individual mentally processes

external and internal stimuli that influence the behaviors the individual makes (p. 983). A person's observation of others taking on a task serves as a model for how to do that particular task. The person processes the observation and through this process can learn how to apply that new knowledge to his or her own situation. Bandura (1989) emphasized the thought process as an integral component in the development of one's own self-efficacy, noting that these thought processes rely on reflection of information from varied sources. Thought can be influenced by motivational and informational stimuli which in turn affected by the degree of one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). There is a reciprocal relationship between motivation, information processing, and self-efficacy in the thought process. All the processes inform and respond to each other.

A person's self-efficacy is part of his or her thought processes that involve how he or she interprets and processes stimuli relating to personal abilities. Bandura believed that people are able to develop their own self-efficacy in a given area if they have the opportunity for that development. When developing his theory on self-efficacy in 1977, Bandura experimented with adults who were terrified of snakes. He designed an experiment where the adults would receive different interventions for their fear of snakes. Bandura then recorded the behavior changes of the adults resulting from their experience. The adults were divided into groups involving participant modeling, where they would work to master a task, vicarious modeling of the desired behavior, and a control group which did not receive any training or intervention. As the adults participated in the interventions, their belief in what they could master regarding snakes increased. There was a correlation between the adults' performance with the snakes and their expectations. Further, the adults who participated in the participant modeling developed the strongest efficacy expectations that those who participated in the vicarious modeling exercise, who in turn had a stronger sense of self-efficacy than those adults who did not participate in any training (Bandura, 1977). This

experiment suggests that through participation in activities designed to improve performance, people will improve their own level of expectation for their performance and may be able to transfer that to the success with a new task of challenge.

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as “beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of actions required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). Self-efficacy refers to a person's perception of his or her degree of confidence of his or her capabilities to meet goals. It is the result of a person cognitively processing feedback on his or her performance of a task. This processing not only informs about past performance, it also assesses capabilities for future performance (Cantor, 1990; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). A perception of self-efficacy is open to change depending upon how one evaluates one's performance and processes feedback on that performance.

Self-efficacy is also multi-dimensional. It may differ in magnitude, depending on the degree of difficulty of the tasks. It may differ in the degree of generality from one task to another. Finally, it may differ in degree of strength, depending upon the task and the individual (Bandura, 1977). This multi-dimensional aspect of self-efficacy suggests that in order to increase one's level of self-efficacy, it may be necessary for a person to repeat a task designed to improve performance and to receive frequent feedback on his or her progress toward mastery (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). It may be that task completion and feedback on progress form a process in the development of self-efficacy.

It is this process of information and feedback on one's performance on a task that helps to develop and build a person's perceived self-efficacy. People learn from their observations. Further, because people will process information from observations differently, people will develop varied levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Thus, if several people master a

performance task at the same time, the level of self-efficacy developed among them will vary due to how each one has processed the experience. People process their own feedback on their performance, making judgments on their ability as a result. Lane and Lane (2001) stressed self-efficacy may change because of this feedback. As self-efficacy is a product of this thought process, it is a component of the grander Social Cognitive Theory.

Social cognitive theory may be constructivist in that it focuses on how people mentally process the stimuli they are receiving from things such as their environment, tasks they are working on, and their confidence in their abilities to make decisions (Dzewaltowski, 1994). The people use these stimuli to construct a scenario where their actions will lead them to certain results. People anticipate future outcomes for their actions and set goals from this anticipation. These outcome expectations and goals motivate people to make plans to take action. They help them to regulate their behavior in the attainment of those goals (Bandura, 1991). This anticipation of the outcome expectations serves to motivate people to set goals and to evaluate their own abilities and capacity to reach those goals (Bandura, 1977). People have to visualize themselves accomplishing their goals before they can work to attain them.

People have to believe that they have the ability to establish and meet goals that they themselves set. This belief may help motivate them to realize these goals. People's belief in their ability to meet goals will help them to regulate the behavior they need in order to reach these goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). Reivich (2010) observed that the level of one's perceived self-efficacy reflects one's belief in whether he or she has the agency and ability to affect one's chances of meeting set goals. This belief of agency is a central component of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy references one's perception of one's agency in one's capabilities to accomplish self-set goals. Dzewaltowski (1994) observed people have to regulate their own behavior when working to attain

goals. The goals motivate people to take the necessary actions to achieve them, provided the people believe they can do so (Locke & Latham, 2002). Setting attainable goals and developing reasonable expectations for outcomes are key components in both social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory.

2.6.2 Goal Attainment and Self-efficacy Development

Goal attainment theory has similar components to self-efficacy theory. It helps to focus a person's attention on activities related to the goal at hand. Locke and Latham (2002) performed a meta-analysis of 35 years of research literature concerning goal setting. From their study, they were able to conclude that goal setting and attainment help to motivate a person to put forth more effort in the achievement of the goal. This motivation also encourages persistence toward the goal, while invoking a strategy to reach the goal. The more difficult the goal, the more effort a person has to put forth to attain the goal (Locke & Latham, 2002). Self-efficacy theory in turn posits that the higher a sense of self-efficacy one has, the more effort and persistence one will put forth on a challenging task to attain desired results (Bandura, 1989; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Bandura (1989) described the relationship between self-efficacy and goal setting by stating: "Much human behavior is regulated by forethought embodying cognized goals, and personal goal setting is influenced by self-appraisal of capabilities. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves and the firmer their commitment" (p. 1175).

Goal setting involves people visualizing the outcomes of their actions and being able to discipline themselves in order manage their time and behavior to meet their goal. It is the vision of attaining this goal in the future that motivates people to expend the effort to do so (Bandura,

1991). The goal setting process would seem to have a reciprocal relationship regarding self-efficacy. A person's ability to set and attain goals is a process affected by the level of self-efficacy a person has, while a person's attainment of those goals may influence his or her level of self-efficacy. Goals serve as a means of motivation for people.

While goal attainment may be an important part of the development of self-efficacy, it is not the only part. Bandura (1977) noted that "Expectations of personal self-efficacy are derived from four principal sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (p. 191) (See Figure 5).



Figure 5. Components of Self-efficacy.

Of these four sources, the confidence formed from accomplishing tasks may be the most effective way to develop and build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989; Lane & Lane, 2001; Zulkosky, 2009). The degree of difficulty of the task determines if the task truly builds self-efficacy. If the

task is too easy, the person working on it may quickly master the task and develop a false sense of his or her own abilities (Bandura, 1977). By contrast, if the task is too difficult, the person may become frustrated and give up entirely. In that scenario, one's sense of self-efficacy diminishes. For task completion to have the effect of building self-efficacy, it must be moderately challenging (Bandura, 1977). In his theory of the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky (as referenced in Levykh, 2008) contended that true learning takes place when a person masters a task or challenge that lies beyond his or her current ability. This learning takes place with the help of others who guide the person as the person works to acquire a new skill (Levykh, 2008). Like the zone of proximal development, the mastery of a performance task may work best when it focuses on tasks just beyond a person's current capabilities with support from others who can help the person master it. This implies that a task needs to challenge people so that they feel a sense of accomplishment and growth when they master it.

Mastering a task may help people develop a sense of pride and confidence in their abilities. When people successfully complete a task by their own effort, they will improve their degree of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Lahart et al., 2009, Zulkosky, 2009). However, it is important that people perceive that they mastered the task due to their own talents and abilities. If they believe that they only mastered a task because someone else actually performed most of it, then their level of self-efficacy will not grow. They will attribute that success to someone else (Bandura, 1989; Schunk, 1990). Therefore, it is important to provide people with an opportunity to complete a task and ensure that they perceive that their effort is what led to that task completion. Weiser and Riggio (2010) suggested that in order to build one's sense of self-efficacy, one has to have opportunities to take on a new task, master it, and receive feedback on the performance. It may be

that this feedback helps people to perceive whether they completed the task through their own abilities or through the assistance of others.

People may also demonstrate growth in their self-efficacy through vicarious observation of others performing and mastering a task. It is important that the person who performs the task is modeling the proper means to do it for the observers (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). What makes this modeling particularly effective is if the person observing the model can make a connection between him or herself and the person demonstrating the task. People making that connection begin to think that if the person mastering the task is like them, they can do it also. Bandura (1977) noted that if adults see a variety of models performing a task, they begin to think that anybody can accomplish it. With children, though, if the person mastering the task is dissimilar to them, they will attribute the mastery of the task by the model as something that is beyond their control (Reivich, 2010). Children need to believe that they can master the task.

If people do not have the opportunity to perform a task or to see it modeled, it may be possible to help them develop their self-efficacy through verbal persuasion. People often react positively to verbal persuasion. This can provide them with the encouragement and motivation to attempt a challenging task and to persist in order to complete it. Verbal persuasion can serve to reinforce someone's pursuit of a goal or encourage him or her to meet the challenge of a task (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). This persuasion and encouragement may be more effective if it relates to a specific task. General words of support are nice but have little effect on a person's overall development of self-efficacy (Reivich, 2010). Direct, task-specific positive feedback may be more helpful to people in their development of self-efficacy.

People not only need opportunities to master tasks, examples of task performance, and persuasion to help them develop their self-efficacy, they also need to be in the right frame of mind

to undertake the endeavor in first place. The fourth way that self-efficacy is developed and maintained is through people's moods. Levykh (2008) noted that Vygotsky observed that one's mood is an important component to accomplishing any new learning. Vygotsky acknowledged that there is an important relationship between an individual's emotional experience and perception, memory, decision-making and behavioral mastery (Levykh, 2008). Vygotsky would seem to support Bandura's ascription of how positive mood affects one's ability to process new information, learn, and master new tasks. If a positive mood affects a person's capability to acquire the knowledge to master tasks in the development of self-efficacy, it would seem the reverse is also true, that a negative mood goes on to diminish a person's sense of self-efficacy. People may be more willing to take on new tasks when they are in a good mood than when they are in a bad one. Having a positive outlook when one confronts a new task helps that person to master the task and thereby increase his or her self-efficacy.

2.6.3 Self-efficacy and Parenting Practices

If it is possible to increase self-efficacy through one of these four ways, how can this self-efficacy be applied to parenting? It is important to understand that self-efficacy can be broken into the categories of General Self-Efficacy (GSE) and Situation Specific Self-Efficacy (SSE). Mencl, Tay, Schwoer, and Drasgow (2012) described general self-efficacy as an overall belief that one has the knowledge and capability to take on a wide variety of tasks and be successful at them. Situation specific self-efficacy involves a person having a specific level of self-efficacy that is particular to a certain task or area. A person who has a general sense of self-efficacy may be able to apply that self-efficacy to more idiosyncratic tasks. It can help the person make the necessary

adaptations to the task requirements in order to persevere with the task should it become challenging. If a person succeeds at a specific task and develops a strong situation specific self-efficacy, aspects of this specific self-efficacy may transfer to other tasks (Mencl et al., 2012). It may be true that a person has a high situation specific self-efficacy for one task, but not for another. However, aspects of a strong SSE may help the person perform a different, unrelated task. Self-efficacy grows because of the successful performance of that task. Both the SSE and the GSE play important roles in expanding a person's overall self-efficacy and strengthening it (Weiser & Riggio, 2010). Parents may demonstrate varying degrees of SSE and GSE and this variance may influence how educators develop parental involvement programs.

It may be better to help parents build a strong SSE first before helping them to develop a strong GSE geared toward helping their children with learning tasks. Parents may need to have confidence in their ability to complete one parenting task before they feel ready to take on additional ones. A strong parental SSE could give the parent the confidence to engage in specific parental engagement activities designed to address desired outcomes. Aspects of the successful development of one SSE may be able to transfer to additional tasks and help to develop a parent's GSE. These tasks could include such things as collaborating with the community or engaging in learning support behaviors to help children aspire to complete difficult classes and to graduate from high school. The role that a general sense of self-efficacy may be able to play on parental involvement is that it may provide foundational skill levels from which the parents develop their confidence in their ability to help their children with learning tasks and may be more willing to become involved with school. The administrative team can then develop parent involvement programs designed to strengthen those skills.

People with a strong sense of self-efficacy may be more likely to take on new and challenging tasks than people who have a weak sense of self-efficacy. Thus, parents with a strong sense of self-efficacy may be able to develop new parenting skills better than parents with a weaker sense of self-efficacy at the secondary level can (Bandura, 1989). These people are also more likely to put the required time and effort into a task to master it. They are also more likely to stick with a task if they face challenges and difficulties during their activity (Bandura, 1989; Coleman & Karraker, 1997). Their willingness to stick with a task implies that they would be more likely to stay with it and overcome challenges once started and that they would be likely to complete it. This can help when implementing a new parent outreach and training program to improve their parenting skills in order to more effectively engage with their children in their learning.

Though the theory of self-efficacy may help explain why some parents may be more willing to take on new challenges than others, other mediating factors may influence the development of that self-efficacy. Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott and Rich (2007) suggested that self-efficacy development is also affected by a series of variables that include one's general mental ability, personality types, and experience. In their 2007 study on self-efficacy, Judge et al. found that one's experience, conscientiousness, and general mental ability were better predictors of how one would perform on a task than one's level of self-efficacy did. It may be that a combination of experience, general mental ability, and key personality traits shape one's sense of self-efficacy. Because of this influence of personality traits and the difference between general self-efficacy and specific self-efficacy, it may be difficult to assume that the same methods used to increase one's perceived self-efficacy will have the effect on all parties.

There may be an over reliance on self-efficacy as a predictor of how well a person will perform on a task. As noted by Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner and Putka (2002) a growth in

one's self-efficacy does not necessarily translate into improvement in a task that one is attempting to master if the self-efficacy results in a person spending less time learning and planning to perform the task. It may be that self-efficacy wanes when a task becomes more complex and requires more cognitive actions to master (Lane & Lane, 2001). It may also be that one's own prior experience with a task leads one to have more success in attempting and mastering that task than if one came to it fresh (Judge et al., 2007). One's self-efficacy in relation to the ability to master a task may also diminish if there is too much time between a person's initial exposure to the task and subsequent exposures (Lane & Lane, 2001; Vancouver et al., 2002). These observations suggest that in order to build and sustain a person's self-efficacy toward a task, it may be necessary to provide them with simple tasks to begin with and to reduce the time between the task performances. It may also be that the person needs sustained exposure and practice in mastering a task to develop self-efficacy firmly.

Researchers may ask if there are limits to the degree of self-efficacy a person may acquire. Lahart et al. (2009) noted that in some cases, self-efficacy can result in one having an over inflated sense of confidence. This can lead to people having a false impression of what they can and cannot do. In these cases, the person's sense of self-efficacy is not commensurate with the person's actual abilities. Yet, because the person possesses this strong sense of self-efficacy, the person does not accurately perceive his or her actual abilities. Cahill and Gallo (2006) noted that people might have a false sense of their actual abilities. They differentiate between a person who is willing to undertake a task as compared to a person who actually has the skill to do the task. Someone may have a strong self-efficacy to undertake a complex job that requires a specialized skill set the person does not actually possess. Though the person may have a great attitude and be willing to take on the job, the person would not have the requisite skills to take on the job successfully. This

paradox suggests that the concept of self-efficacy is mostly theoretical when it comes to explaining the discrepancy between people wanting to perform a task and actually being able to do it.

In some instances, a person's strong sense of self-efficacy can have detrimental effects on a task. Vancouver et al. (2002) showed that having a strong sense of self-efficacy could lead people to stick with a bad or failing action for a longer period rather than switch methods or strategies to adapt to the task difficulty. The person believes that he or she is correct, despite evidence to the contrary. Because of this overconfidence, the person continues to engage in behaviors that are not producing the desired results.

The degree and accuracy of self-efficacy a person develops may be contingent on the degree and accuracy of information the person uses to form that self-efficacy. Bandura and Locke (2003) argued that people develop a skewed sense of self-efficacy if the information people have when they are developing their self-efficacy is inaccurate. People develop a false sense of their own capabilities based on the false information they have to process. Because bad information has led to the development of this false sense of self-efficacy, it really does not reflect one's true sense of self-efficacy. For parents' beliefs of their abilities to be accurate, they have to be grounded in accurate information (Bandura & Locke, 2003). This information may affect not only how parents process information but also how they may respond to feedback on a task. If parents' develop a false sense of their ability through their processing of inaccurate or misleading information, they will not really develop an accurate picture of their own abilities. This could possibly have negative consequences for the parent, as it may lead them to make decisions or take actions that they really do not have the competency or skill to master.

A person who has a strong sense of self-efficacy may become complacent in his or her attempt to master a task. This complacency has the effect of the person feeling that they already

have the requisite knowledge needed to perform it. The person may decrease his or her effort to accomplish a task as a result. Because of this sense of confidence, the person may not adequately plan; set aside time or resources to accomplish the task. This complacency may also result in the person believing he or she has mastered the task when that is not the case. Vancouver et al. (2002) observed that when a person becomes complacent due to a high sense of perceived self-efficacy toward a task, the person actually spends less time trying to master the task and is less responsive to feedback on how to improve. The possible learning that could come from performing the task or adjusting one's actions as a result diminishes because the person with the high self-efficacy does not believe he or she needs additional help. Complacency attributed to having a high a level of self-efficacy may not lead to a person learning incrementally, but could result in a degree of self-deception on the part of the person that reduces the person's ability to grow and learn (Martocchio & Judge, 1997). As such, a person's complacency could be detrimental when applied to a task that needs to be mastered.

Despite the critiques of self-efficacy theory, it would seem that self-efficacy is associated with positive outcomes of self-confidence, the ability to set and meet goals, and the ability to overcome challenges when working on a task (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Schunk, 1990; Zulkosky, 2009). A strong sense of self-efficacy helps individuals succeed in new situations and possibly overcome obstacles that may deter them from meeting goals. With students, a strong sense of self-efficacy may help them succeed in academics despite whatever other hurdles they may encounter (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Seegan et al., 2012). Developing a child's sense of self-efficacy may be a means to help the child develop confidence and resiliency to overcome challenges that the child may face while going through school. Though children may develop some self-efficacy

through their own experiences, they may also benefit from parents who already have a strong sense of self-efficacy and can pass that on to their children.

2.6.4 Parent Self-efficacy and Deciding to Become Involved With Learning

A parent's perception of his or her own self-efficacy in a given area may affect a parent's decisions to act in that area. With school, it could influence the parents' decision to become involved with their child's learning and the types of activities the parent participates in (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Lahart et al., 2009). Coleman and Karraker (1997) predicted that parental perceptions about their own parenting abilities may determine if they will become involved with their child's learning. It becomes crucial for educators to find ways to help parents improve their perceptions about their own capabilities as parents in order to help them increase their level of involvement with their children's education.

Educators may have to look at what components help to build a parent's sense of self-efficacy in helping their children learn. They may have to plan activities to help parents develop their level of self-efficacy within those components. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted that a parent's sense of self-efficacy may be derived from their own successful experiences or their perception of whether help they received on a problem in the past was effective. The parents' memories of when others assisted them with a problem may influence their own sense of self-efficacy. Parents rely on this self-efficacy when they choose ways to be involved with their child's education. In an area where they may specifically believe that they have a strength, parents may be more likely to become involved with a child's education than not. Whether a learning activity is appropriate and aligns with the school affects the effectiveness of activity. Parents should also

note if the type of involvement is appropriate for the developmental stage of the child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). The appropriateness of the type of involvement for the age of the child and the opportunity to help a parent build his or her self-efficacy through designed programs could help the parents feel successful about their ability to work with their children on learning activities.

Children's sense of worth and self-esteem may be influenced by their relationship with their parents. Weiser and Riggio (2010) observed that parental involvement helps children develop their own self-efficacy, noting that children observe how parents behave and emulate in those behaviors. Their self-efficacy develops through their observation of their parents modeling behaviors. Children absorb their parents' expectations, attitudes, and ideas (Comer, 1984). This may influence the amount of effort they put forth in a task. A strong relationship between the parent and the child also influences the effect of the effort. The processes help the children develop their own level of self-efficacy and can help connect parent expectations for their success to their actual academic performance (Weiser & Riggio, 2010). The model parents set for their children may influence their behavior and willingness to master a task.

Stress can also affect a parent's level of self-efficacy. If parents are dealing with a series of difficulties that arise from their socioeconomic status or neighborhood, they may experience stress. Parents experiencing high stress may feel that they do not have the abilities needed to help their children succeed in school. This stress can affect not only how the parents see themselves but also how their children see them. Low parental self-efficacy is associated with high levels of parental stress. This stress can impede parent relationships with their children and negatively affect how their children perform at school. Parental programs designed to improve parental self-efficacy may result in lowering stress and increasing involvement as a result (Bloomfield &

Kendall, 2012). Parents may be better able to help their children if they have lower stress and may be more encouraged to help their children with learning activities.

2.6.5 Parent Involvement Programs and Self-efficacy

Parental involvement programs that focus on increasing parental engagement with their children in learning may include components that center on parental self-efficacy. A student's sense of self-efficacy may be associated with the parent's sense of self-efficacy. Parents may be able to pass on their own competencies to their children through modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). If parents can transfer a sense of strong self-efficacy to their children, it has the potential to help them believe in their own abilities to accept new tasks, persevere with challenging work, develop high standards for themselves, and complete jobs assigned to them. This can help children do better in school academically.

Parents may be the most important role model children have when they are younger. At this time, parents have great influence on children (Epstein, 1995). Parents can model proper behaviors to students both directly and indirectly. Parents model academic behavior through their own reading, calculating, reviewing of materials, and organizing tasks. Parents also model academic behaviors when they ask children about their school day or question them about their homework. These actions show children that parents are interested in their work and suggest the great importance of academics. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) noted that these activities are important as the children take their cues as to what is important and valued from their parents. Students often then internalize and adapt these behaviors as their own. A parent's modeling of

academic behaviors becomes a crucial means for a parent to help a child develop his or her own academic skills and confidence in his or her own academic abilities.

Children need feedback from parents on their work. Parents can support their children's learning activities and build their child's level of self-efficacy through proper reinforcement of academic behaviors (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). This reinforcement may take various forms, including praise, encouragement, and rewards. The reinforcement helps build student self-efficacy by persuading them that they can achieve a task. Reinforcement creates a positive mood for the student that helps him or her to be open to new learning methods and techniques (Bandura, 1977). These reinforcements may be more effective if they are things that the child values, something he or she wants to receive. They could be verbal praise or material rewards. When the child receives reinforcement that he or she likes, the child is more likely to continue to continue with a certain behavior so the child can receive additional reinforcement (Lysakowski & Walberg, 1981). In the continuation of behaviors that build upon academic skills, the child will increase his or her academic self-efficacy.

Parents lastly can influence their children's education and build their self-efficacy through direct instruction. With direct instruction, parents engage with their children on specific learning tasks. Jeynes (2012) suggested that parents participate with their children in particular learning tasks, such as shared reading and checking homework. These parental engagement activities can also be things such as parents asking children questions that require simple knowledge and comprehension answers or they can be tasks that require complex thinking skills that require students to analyze and synthesize information. With these activities, the parent is helping the student to master performance tasks. When the child sees the parent participating with him or her in activities that support the school, the child may begin to realize that the parent values the child's

education and the child may internalize the behaviors the parent is demonstrating. Parent involvement programs established by the school should understand how parent participation in these activities will help the child to grow, and how they will affect their level of self-efficacy.

Educators can design parent involvement programs that utilize known research on the development of self-efficacy to better ensure that any degree of self-efficacy developed by the parents is based on growth from participation and mastery of performance tasks and not from a self-deceiving, over blown sense of self-confidence. If the schools can help parents to increase their level of self-efficacy, the parents may be more likely to improve their own coping behavior and be able to stick with a task longer, such as spending more time with their children on schoolwork (Bandura & Locke, 2003). School programs that encourage parental support for children's schooling are associated with positive academic achievement for those children (Jeynes, 2012). If schools can improve the level of parental support for schooling, they may be able to improve student academic achievement.

Whether the parents have a strong general sense of self-efficacy or a specific sense of self-efficacy, their participation with their children in these learning activities helps them to form positive attitudes about how to approach education. The children may improve their own sense of self-efficacy, which can lead to improved academic success. They internalize and adopt their parents' attitudes and levels of self-efficacy. Research has shown that students who have a strong sense of self-efficacy demonstrate qualities that can help them succeed at school, such as taking and completing courses, improving grades, and increasing their graduation rate (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Increasing parental self-efficacy in order to help increase the level of self-efficacy in their children could be a focal point of a parent involvement program.

Parents can develop their school self-efficacy to help them become more confident and comfortable in working with their children in their learning. Coleman and Karraker (1997) stated that self-efficacy is an “integral component of a dynamic, emergent system subject to modification in response to changing demands of the task, situational determinants, and individual developmental processes” (p. 51). This promotes the idea that self-efficacy is malleable and capable of being increased in individuals. This implies that, through carefully designed programs, self-efficacy can be developed and grown for parents and children. Through the establishment of parenting programs designed to improve parental self-efficacy, educators can help parents improve their own parenting abilities and self-efficacy. Educators can provide parents with a series of parenting tasks that they can master and with the opportunity to observe someone modeling proper parenting behavior designed to support his or her child. Timely and positive feedback can inform the parents about their effectiveness of their ability to help their children master certain learning tasks. Educators in such parental programs can also work with parents to develop parenting goals for them. As their self-efficacy grows, the parents may come to base their behavior on these goals. They may then attempt to help their children with learning tasks that are more complex.

A parental involvement program can design activities where parents can incorporate modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction of activities as a way to transfer the self-efficacy they have developed in themselves to their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Educators can help parents to identify specific learning tasks to master and to help them set goals. Bandura (1997) suggested that the components of a program designed to improve self-efficacy let people know in advance the task to be performed. As parents learn to do these tasks, they will increase their own self-efficacy in this particular area. This may help them to change the way they view the task entirely (Mencl et al., 2012). Upon their development of a strong sense of self-

efficacy in a specific area, with reinforcement and support from others, parents may be able to generalize this sense of self-efficacy to other areas and generalize it. If their overall confidence in their ability to help their children with learning tasks grows, they may be more likely to be motivated to become involved with more learning activities, increasing the frequency of their overall involvement and engagement with learning. Figure 6 shows the progression of parents developing a strong sense of specific self-efficacy with a mastery of a single task to a strong sense of general self-efficacy to an increase in parent involvement.

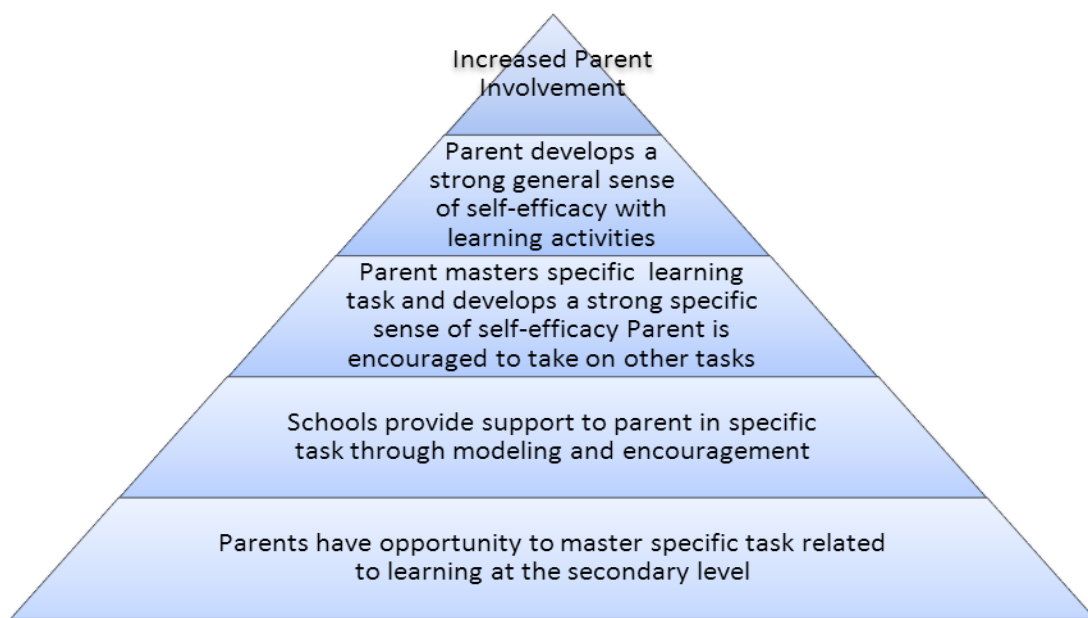


Figure 6. Parent involvement and self-efficacy.

So that parents may establish a goal, it would help if the program would establish short time lines between the initial introduction of a task and its follow-up attempts. This may allow parents to visualize how they may be able to accomplish the task. The program could also ensure that self-efficacy benchmarks and ratings measure performance of the task in the domain indicated of the parents. Parent may respond favorably to task specific feedback regarding their performance

and progress on the task. Parents may also appreciate the opportunity to view people modeling behaviors that they themselves wish to develop. In other words, a parent involvement program instituted by the school to increase the parents' level of self-efficacy would adhere to the same practices and concepts that are integral to the concept of self-efficacy mastery. How closely the activities in the program meet the intended outcomes would then determine how the program is evaluated (Bloomfield & Kendall, 2012). A successful parent involvement program would be effective if it communicates the task and means of evaluation to the parents so they understand what it is they must do.

2.7 SELF-EFFICACY SUMMARY

A person's self-efficacy in a particular area may influence that person's performance and motivation. Research notes that people with strong senses of self-efficacy tend to take on more challenges and persist at a task longer until they accomplish that task. A strong sense of self-efficacy may help people to establish and attain goals. Bandura(1977) observed that self-efficacy can be developed through activities where people have the opportunity to master a task themselves, observe other people like them master a task, are encouraged to master a task and have a positive outlook. Thus, self-efficacy is malleable. Additionally, self-efficacy can grow from one's mastery and self-confidence in a single area to a more generalized sense of confidence in other areas. It would seem that it would be possible to help develop one's self-efficacy in a given area through specific activities designed to support that person accomplish a task or meet a goal. This approach may be applied to parent involvement with learning at the secondary level in order to help increase both parent self-efficacy with learning and parent involvement. This study seeks to understand if

there is a correlational relationship between the two areas and if so, what the implications are for educators.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

A self-administered survey questionnaire was used to identify relationships between parental socioeconomic status (SES), self-efficacy, and parent involvement. The population of interest was parents of 10th grade students attending schools that are near-suburbs of the Pittsburgh Public School District in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. These districts share similar characteristics such as age, size, and demographics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The study employed a survey design, drawing from quantitative and qualitative data. The survey included both open- and closed-ended items and measured parental SES, self-efficacy, and involvement with student learning activities.

This study utilized a cross-sectional design using statistical tests of association to assess relationships among parental SES, self-efficacy, and involvement; as well as to measure the frequency and type of activities parents choose to engage in at the secondary level. The study correlated these variables to determine if a relationship exists between them. Cross-sectional designs have limitations in studying a population in that they do not allow for analysis of long-term trends that may affect the data being collected. As a cross-sectional study, it is limited in that it does not indicate a longitudinal trend in parent involvement over time. It also does not prove or suggest any causation between data. Mertens (2010) noted that “cross-sectional studies have the advantage of examining the characteristics of several groups at one point in time” (p.

177). This allows the researcher to collect data in a shorter period and has the benefit of having a lower cost than a longitudinal study.

3.1 VARIABLES

The survey's response categories allowed for responses concerning parent involvement, self-efficacy, and SES to be converted into categorical, ordinal, and continuous variables. The categorical variables are those that group different types of parent involvement activities. The ordinal variables are those that reflect the degree to which parents rate their level of self-efficacy with learning. Response categories further divide variables into dichotomous and continuous depending on whether a parent had to record "yes" or "no" to a response or rate their involvement on a scale.

This study sought to measure whether parental involvement at the secondary level is influenced by the degree of self-efficacy a parent possesses. This study also sought to determine if there is an association between parental socioeconomic status and both parental self-efficacy and parental involvement. As parental SES exists before a child becomes an adolescent, it is determined to be an independent variable in the study. Self-efficacy is viewed in the study as a change agent affecting parental involvement. As such, it was considered as an independent variable. The study investigated whether a trend existed in the degree of parental involvement that is dependent upon the degree of parental self-efficacy and SES. Parent involvement is the dependent variable in this study.

3.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCESS

For this study, the sample frame comes from the population of parents of 10th grade high school students selected from four suburban school districts in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area in Allegheny County. The districts in the study have some demographic traits in common. They have a median age that ranges from 41-44. Whites account for 75% or more of the overall populations. Combined, they have an average income of \$46,015. Women outnumber the men in these communities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). All four school districts have K-12 student populations less than 1,650 students. Three of the school districts border the city of Pittsburgh. They were among the first suburban communities of that city. As such, they tend to be older than communities built farther away from Pittsburgh as that urban area expanded. As such, these communities tend to have less available land on which to expand. Hence, opportunities to develop new revenues from the building of additional houses are limited. These districts often share similar challenges facing larger urban districts. Likewise, the schools in this sample frame share similar demographics and size.

To protect the parents and students involved in the study, the districts have been given pseudonyms. Table 3 depicts the sampling plan:

Table 3: *Sampling Plan*

Note: N = 109

<i>School</i>	<i>Total student population</i>	<i>Sample frame of 10th grade students</i>	<i># of parents sampled</i>	<i># of parents expected at 50% response rate</i>
Darby	427	117	58	29
Dorchester	220	44	22	11

Table 3 (continued)

Orchard View	419	104	52	26
Trent	602	175	87	43
Totals	1,668	440	219	109

To narrow the focus of the study of secondary school parents, parents were surveyed who have children in 10th grade at all these schools, thus being in the midst of their high school experience. This provided a sample frame of 440 tenth grade students from whom to sample their parents. Of those sampled from the possible total, a 50% response rate was targeted. Rea and Parker (2005) note a sample size of 50% of the population provides accurate data so long as the sample truly represents the general population. Based on this 50% calculation, it was anticipated that 109 surveys would be returned from all the schools. Determining the sample size in advance helped to reduce the chance of the study results suffering from Type I or Type II errors (Huck, 2008).

The study employed a nonprobability, purposive sampling design in order to maximize the possible sample size. The use of nonprobability sampling has the benefit of allowing the researcher to quickly gather data and develop an understanding of the main tenets of the questions being researched. It was intended that through the use of the purposive sampling of all the 10th grade parents that a representative sample of the population being studied would result. All possible 10th grade parents in the population were surveyed through the use of electronic and paper surveys. This sampling process was time efficient and cost effective. It provided for access to the population without having to rely on a list of individual names to contact or requiring intimate knowledge of that population. In this way, it was a proficient means to sample a small population.

As a nonprobability sample, the probability of an individual parent responding was not known; meaning that there was no guarantee that the probability of that response was equal among

potential respondents. Without a guarantee of an equal chance of the probability of response, the returned surveys were not able to be analyzed within the framework of a normal distribution. Because of this, the data gathered can only describe the individual respondents.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

This study utilized a self-administered survey to gather data from parents. These survey questions are derived from Epstein's (1995) parent involvement typology and Bandura's (1977) description of how self-efficacy is developed. For parent involvement, the questions focused on items 1-5 of the typology, ranging from basic parenting to involvement in school governance groups. The responses allowed the researcher to examine what opportunities parents may have for shared decision making at the secondary level and opportunities to become involved with school activities. The survey either was mailed to parents as a paper copy or was distributed electronically as a link through email. The survey consisted of 15 closed-ended and 3 open-ended questions that measure parental involvement, parental self-efficacy, and parental SES. Three open-ended questions were included on the survey that ask parents about their involvement and what the school can do to help them improve that involvement. The survey utilized Likert-type scales to rank the variables assessed through the closed-ended questions. These response categories also had a numeric code. Open coding was applied to the open-ended responses to identify main themes and categorize them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). From these main categories, axial coding was utilized to identify sub-categories. Emergent themes were then identified from the categorization of these responses. Table 4 depicts the questions and the variables measured by the question:

Table 4: *Variables and Their Question Numbers*

	Variable #1	Variable #2	Variable #3
	Independent	Dependent	Dependent
	Parental SES	Parental Self-efficacy	Parental Involvement
Question Numbers	6,7,8	9	10,11,12,13,14,15,16, 17,18

Epstein's research primarily addressed involvement activities of parents of elementary school children (Epstein, 1986, 1995). In the survey, those activities were revised to accurately reflect the types of activities that parents of secondary school, adolescent children may undertake to support their children with learning. This revision was based upon feedback received from the pilot survey.

The closed-ended question that asked parents about their own self-efficacy was presented as a matrix question. Babbie (1998) noted that the use of a matrix format is an efficient use of space and may actually help the respondent to complete the question faster. The matrix question grouped the self-efficacy categories together and scaled them from 1-5. When parents completed this question, they were able to review their response from an earlier question and use that to inform their selection of a response for a succeeding question (Babbie, 1998). Survey respondents then checked a box that best represented their comfort level with adapting to and mastering new tasks. The use of the matrix format in this study may have helped parents to complete the questionnaire more efficiently and reduce the amount of time they took to do so.

Closed-ended questions also measured parental SES. Parents were asked a series of demographic questions about their background. These questions also included items on income and education level attained. SES was determined from a combination of the parent's income and education level.

The three open-ended questions allowed parents to provide additional descriptive information on their level of involvement with learning, but also to provide input as to what the school can do to help them increase that involvement. They provided detailed data to supplement the close-ended questions. Data gathered through open-ended questions allowed for more in-depth explanations from the respondents regarding their perspectives on parent involvement and self-efficacy at the secondary level. The respondents can address items that are not expressly stated in closed-ended questions in their own words.

The length of the survey was 8 pages. The time estimated for the parent to complete the survey was about 10 to 15 minutes. The questions were laid out in a format that made it easy for the respondent to navigate the survey. Jargon was avoided in the questions; the questions were worded in a manner that was easy for the respondent to understand.

3.3.1 Survey Advantages and Disadvantages

This study's use of a self-administered questionnaire ran the risk of not having an interviewer able to answer parents' questions about an item. This could have led to parental misinterpretation of the question when responding or, worse, parental avoidance of a question altogether. Huck (2008) noted that a lack of response can create a non-response bias which can negatively affect whether there is enough of a representation of the population to generalize the results. Despite this potential

disadvantage, the self-administered questionnaire presented several advantages for this study. A self-administered survey took parents less time to complete than if they were to sit with an interviewer. Parents may also have been more honest when completing a self-administered questionnaire, as they may not have felt that they were being judged by the interviewer or sought to please him or her with their answers (Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2004). It was also possible to cover a wide range of parents in a comparatively short amount of time with a survey. This helped insure that the sample best reflected the population being studied. Rea and Parker (2005) noted that one of the main advantages of using a survey to gather data is its capability to be replicated by other researchers.

To gain access to the study population, the superintendents of the school districts selected for the study were sent letters asking their permission to survey parents on their parenting practices. To help guard against non-response bias, follow-up letters or emails went out to parents who had not returned their initial survey. If those did not work, additional phone calls were made to parents requesting their participation. To help ensure an adequate response rate, parents were incentivized to complete the survey through the offer of a chance to enter into a raffle for gift cards upon completion of the survey. Parents were informed that all responses to the survey were confidential and that their privacy was protected.

3.3.2 Survey Research Guidelines and Rationale

When creating a survey, the wording should be clear to understand for all, so that the respondent would have a clear idea of what is asked and how to respond. Simplicity of expression helped to make the survey easier to understand and complete for all respondents, as there is less confusion

over terms (Babbie, 2013). The use of the survey to acquire this data had many advantages. Babbie (2013) observed that the survey is the “best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly” (p. 253). The use of the survey allowed the researcher to get data on a representative sample from the larger population. Babbie (2013) noted that with a survey a “carefully selected probability sample in combination with a standardized questionnaire offers the possibility of making refined descriptive assertions about a population” (p. 286). The survey helped the researcher determine how people perceived themselves and their actions. It also had the advantages of being immediate and cost efficient, having been sent out and interpreted with less expense than would a longitudinal or experimental study.

Electronic surveys were developed using the Qualtrics survey system. First round surveys were sent to parents electronically for those parents who have email addresses. Each link to a survey had an identifier for each school. Parents in the sample were sent these identifying links for each participating school district. Follow-up automated phone calls and email reminders were sent to the parents to remind them to complete the survey.

By July 5th, the response rate for the online survey remained low. At that point, superintendents were contacted to see if paper copies of the survey could be mailed to the parents. With permission from the superintendents and school boards, paper copies of the survey were mailed home. Paper copies were color coded by school to make them easier to identify by individual school district. The response rate with the paper copies more than doubled the response rate through the online copies of the survey. The use of both paper and electronic surveys helped to reduce response bias by reaching out to parents who may not have a computer.

3.3.3 The Use of Open-ended Questions

Responses to open-ended questions were coded. Chamez suggested that the process of initial and focused coding be utilized in transcribing open-ended questions (as cited in Mertens, 2010, p. 426). Responses to open-ended questions were coded using open coding methods, examining the responses for key phrases associated with parent involvement and parental self-efficacy. Axial coding was derived from the open coding process in order to identify the central themes and ideas that were expressed by the respondents that were relevant to this study. Responses that were mentioned the most often were studied to determine if a pattern or trend existed. Key terms and main ideas were identified from the response statements. Based on these terms and ideas, categories and subcategories were derived. These categories were reported in a table, noting which key terms were reported and their importance to the respondents. A list of codes was made and applied consistently to the open-ended responses. Those data were compared with the closed-ended question responses to see how they compared with each other and to see what outlier responses may exist. These comparative and outlier data may provide a more complete picture of parent self-efficacy and involvement for the researcher. Using qualitative interview coding techniques, themes were identified in the open-ended answers that may not have emerged elsewhere in the survey. The open-ended questions provided a qualitative component to the research, allowing for description and individual voice to be incorporated into the data. Mertens (2010) asserted that a mixed data approach offers a better understanding of the complex social world in which educators operate. Through the use of open-ended questions, the survey provided richer data that depicted a more realistic image of parent involvement and self-efficacy at the secondary level than through the use of close-ended questions alone. They were also be able to

make suggestions as to trainings the school could offer that would help them improve their ability to help their children with learning activities.

3.3.4 The Pilot Survey

To improve the construct and content validity of the survey, a pilot survey was sent to 25 parents of teenage children. Chain sampling was used to obtain this sample for the pilot. This was an effective way to gather a sample from an easily accessible group so that feedback on the survey could be obtained in a timely manner. The pilot survey consisted of 45 closed-ended questions that asked parents of teenage children for their opinions on both parental self-efficacy and their own parent involvement. The respondents were provided with a rating scale to rate the questions from 1-4. Out of 25 pilot surveys sent, 19 responses were returned for a 76% response rate. The respondents were instructed to rate the survey questions. Feedback from the pilot survey informed the question construction and survey format. A common theme from the respondents was that examples of parent involvement activities provided in the survey questions were not applicable to parents of high school students. Therefore, in areas specific examples of how parents can help children with learning were listed, response options were revised to be more aligned to what parents are actually doing to help their children learn at high school. Thus, instead of asking parents if they read to their children specific passages, parents were asked more general questions such as whether they help their children with homework. Another area of concern from respondents to the pilot survey was that the survey was too long and that some questions were repetitive. In response, the amount of questions being asked were scaled back and those questions that were too similar to previous questions were eliminated. There were a few terms that needed to be revised or clarified. For those identified words, words were substituted that are used more

commonly and are more understood by a larger population. Lastly, respondents stated that the length of the survey was too long. As a result, 20 questions were deleted to make the survey more accessible and easier to use by the parents. These revisions helped to improve the construct and content validity of the survey instrument, focusing on areas upon which indicated a consensus of meaning was warranted to improve the validity and reliability of answers from future respondents.

The information from the pilot survey helped to determine whether the respondents understood the questions that were being asked. If there was a consensus on the meaning of a question, that would confirm its construct validity. Borg et al. (1993) noted that construct validity should be determined based the common understandings of parent involvement and self-efficacy, as evidenced by survey respondents' responses to questions. Similarly, content validity concerns whether the survey instrument assesses the items it designed to assess (Huck, 2008). The use of the pilot survey allowed for the improvement of the research project by testing both the construct and content validity of the survey instrument, allowing time to revise the survey before sending it out to the intended population.

3.4 DATA TESTING AND REPORTING

The following section discusses how data from the survey were analyzed and reported. Because the study sought information from both qualitative and quantitative sources, being able to represent the data in a format that can be easily read and condensed for inferences to be made was integral to the effectiveness of the study. SES, self-efficacy and parent involvement were analyzed to determine whether there is an association between them, and what the strength of that association

is. Survey results were also examined to see whether a high level of self-efficacy correlates with a high level of parent involvement with learning at the secondary level.

3.4.1 Hypothesis Testing

For this study, a hypothesis was investigated that stated there is a correlation between parental SES, self-efficacy, and involvement. The null hypothesis stated that these variables are not correlated and that no relationship is present, with the alternative hypothesis and test of statistical significance being non-directional. The standard significance level of .05 was utilized for all statistical analysis.

3.4.2 Categorization of Variables

This study sought to determine if the independent variables of socioeconomic status and self-efficacy correlate with the dependent variable of parent involvement. Composite variables were created by adding together scores of individual questions. For self-efficacy, after two outliers and one question response was removed; it was able to be viewed as a continuous independent variable because the data adjustment made the responses normally distributed. Parent SES was treated as a categorical independent variable (High vs. Low). Parent involvement questions were either dichotomous (Yes vs. No) or categorical. These were all combined into a dichotomous grouping (Never vs. Ever) to form a composite variable. Because the distribution was normal for parent involvement and variances were equal at both levels of SES, the parent involvement composite variable was treated as continuous.

3.4.3 Tests of Normality and Variance

So that the parametric statistical methods being proposed accurately reflect the data collected, tests of statistical assumption were performed. Field (2009) stated “Different statistical models assume different things, and if these models are going to reflect reality accurately, than these assumptions need to be true” (p. 132). First, the frequency of the responses to questions was analyzed with the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine if the requirement for normal distribution was met. In addition, the Brown-Forsythe was used to test for the homogeneity of variance of the variables. The Brown-Forsythe analyzed parent involvement with high and low SES groups to compare their variances in order to determine if they are equal across the two SES groups.

The results of these two tests of assumption determined which statistical tests of significance may be employed.

Normality and variance were affected by the number of responses and the response items selected. Contingent upon the response data meeting the statistical assumptions for testing, ANCOVA was used to measure the associations among the composite variables. The ANCOVA is an inferential test used to analyze the relationships of the variables among the population sample and was the strongest test possible to measure them.

To further measure the relationships of the individual variables and reinforce the ANCOVA, additional alternative non-parametric tests of association were performed. Fisher’s Exact test was used to establish a *p*-value between the dichotomous categorical variables of parent involvement and SES to determine if significant relationships exist between them. This was done to measure the difference of how many respondents fell into which category of SES and dichotomous indicators of parent involvement. T-tests were used to examine mean score

differences on the continuous variable of self-efficacy, comparing means for dichotomous groups for individual parent involvement variables. The use of these descriptive statistics allowed the research to examine the average self-efficacy score per category. These allowed for inferences to be made about relationships of the variables in the sample.

3.4.4 Concerns of Statistical Significance Tests

Testing for statistical significance helps to ensure that the values of the associations among the variables are not the result of sampling error. This serves to rule out associations between the variables that might not represent genuine relationships in the population being studied (Babbie, 1998). These tests do not address the effect size or the practical significance of the observed relationship. The statistical tests helped to determine whether the null hypothesis was true or could be rejected.

3.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The methodology in this study used several formats in which the research questions may be answered. Using contingency tables, the frequency and type of parent involvement were able to be measured among parents of high and low SES. This was compared with parents' degrees of self-efficacy. These data informed the first and third research questions. Tables were used to depict both the frequency and type of parental involvement activities parents engage in with their 10th grade students. This answered the second research question that sought to identify the types of parent involvement activities in which parents engage at the secondary level. Lastly, the open-

ended survey questions that asked parents for their input on what educators can do to help them improve their own self-efficacy with learning were coded and reported in a separate table. This addressed the fourth and final research question. Taken together, the data collected describes the type and frequency of parent involvement, while informing the reader on whether a correlation between self-efficacy and parental involvement exists, if it varies due to a parent's socioeconomic status.

3.6 STUDY DURATION

To undertake a study, consideration must be made for the duration of study as it affects the means to be able to accomplish it. This section gives a brief overview of the approximate length of time needed to complete the dissertation. This study should take approximately one year to complete. Once approved by the dissertation committee, schools in my sample were contacted by letter and by phone to request permission to conduct the research in April. Superintendents were informed that the survey was available through an electronic format composed in the Qualtrics survey system and a paper format. Once permission was granted, schools were asked to distribute surveys to parents through email using links to individual school surveys. These surveys were sent electronically in May. The response rate was then monitored. Email and automated phone reminders were sent to parents who had not yet completed the survey within a three-week window. By June 6, an additional reminder to parents was sent by email and/or letter home. By July 4th, only 30 electronic surveys were returned. School districts were contacted again to request permission from superintendents to send out paper surveys to parents. After permission was given, paper surveys were sent out to parents in mid-July. Completed surveys were received back by

mail and email throughout the rest of the summer. By early September, enough surveys were returned to enable data analysis to begin. Approximately 8 additional weeks were used to analyze the data, with the intent to either accept or reject the null hypothesis. After analyzing the data, it was possible to begin writing Chapters 4 and 5 in October. The final draft of the dissertation was submitted to the dissertation committee in February, and the defense was scheduled for March.

3.7 IRB SUBMISSION

Exempt status was applied for with the IRB because the research did not involve direct contact with children or other protected populations, such as prisoners. This study also did not subject its participants to any risk of physical or psychological harm. There was no biological or medical testing taking place. The research instrument was non-intrusive and did not ask what could be construed as potentially embarrassing or incriminating questions. Respondents completed a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 18 questions comprised of closed- and open-ended questions to gather data on parental self-efficacy and participation in parenting activities as described by Joyce Epstein (1986) in the privacy of their own home.

As indicated to the IRB, all survey submissions are confidential and the identities of the respondents are known only to the researcher. All respondents were made aware of the risks and their rights as participants in a research study. They had full knowledge of the intent of the study prior to participation and were given the option to leave the study at any time. An overview of the study, along with the revised survey instrument was submitted to the IRB.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

This study applied statistical tests to measure the relationships between the variables. The study examined frequency and type of parent involvement through analysis of the responses to those questions. The following section details the analysis methods used to examine the data and discusses statistical tests, tables, and coding techniques involved. This section also identifies the results of those tests as they apply to the research questions and the hypothesis that self-efficacy correlates with parent involvement.

4.1 SAMPLE FRAME DEMOGRAPHICS

The sample frame of the schools studied reflected the homogenous nature of the population there. The U.S. Census (2011) notes the two primary ethnic groups in all four school districts are White with an 88 % and African-American with a 10.7% population density. Yet the ethnic breakup of the respondents broke down as 92% White and only 4% African-American. The only other ethnic groups who responded to the survey were Hispanic at 1%, Pacific Islander at 1%, and Asian-American at 2%. The survey responses did not correspond with the ethnic demographics for all four districts. In terms of actual numbers, there were 78 responses from Whites, 3 responses from African-Americans, 2 responses from Asian-Americans, and 1 response each from Pacific Islander

and Hispanic Americans. The lack of diversity among respondents may have affected the results in that perceptions of self-efficacy and the school program may be influenced by one's own ethnicity and experiences with the school.

Similarly, in terms of gender, women overwhelmingly completed the survey. Few men replied, suggesting that they may either let the women handle all things related to education or that they did not want to take the time to complete the survey. A breakdown of the age and gender of the respondents is depicted in the table below:

Table 5: *Gender and Age of Respondents*

Age	Male	Female
18-20	1	0
21-30	1	1
31-40	1	11
41-50	8	39
51-60	6	16
Over 60	0	0
Total	17	67

Out of 84 respondents who completed this section of the survey, 79% of them were women. This response rate may reflect that mothers are more engaged with their child's education than fathers are, which may be based on traditional role assignments. Particularly in the area of self-efficacy development, it would have been interesting to see if there were differences among males and

females in the development of self-efficacy as it relates to a parent's being more involved in his or her child's education.

Out of the 67 women respondents, 58% were from the age range of 41-50. The majority of the responses were from the female perspective. Interestingly, the majority of the responses from the male perspective also come from the age range of 41-50. The responses of this age group may reflect a different generational perspective than from parents who fall into younger age categories. These parents may be more established financially than younger parents. Table 6 below depicts how the family income levels are distributed by age.

Table 6: *Income Levels of Respondents*

<u>Income</u>	<u>18-20</u>	<u>21-30</u>	<u>31-40</u>	<u>41-50</u>	<u>51-60</u>	<u>Over 60</u>
Up to \$25,000	0	0	1	5	4	0
\$25,000 -\$50,000	0	1	2	10	3	0
\$50,000-\$75,000	0	0	2	12	5	0
\$75,000-\$100,000	0	1	6	11	5	0
\$100,000-\$125,000	0	0	0	5	3	0
\$125,000-\$150,000	0	0	1	2	0	0
\$150,000-\$200,000	0	0	0	2	2	0
Over \$200,000	1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6 depicts that the age range of 41-50 has the most people with a household income of \$50,000- \$75,000 with 12 respondents indicating that income level, 11 respondents claiming \$75,000-\$100,000, and 5 respondents claiming \$100,000-\$125,000. Financial security may mean that the parents do not have to focus on providing the basics to their children, such as school supplies, a quiet place to study, and food.

4.2 DATA REDUCTION

As the data were being analyzed for the survey from the 107 returned surveys, there was a high frequency of missing data from each question. This missing data affected the ability to utilize more complex tests of association and statistical significance such as Gamma and Z test to determine if there were trends among the variables. The lack of data resulted in sparse populated cells for the contingency tables needed to make accurate correlational calculations among the variables. The data collected from the survey did not allow for these affected assumptions to be met. Rather than refer on inferential statistics only to study the phenomenon, the study had to rely on descriptive statistical methods to analyze the data.

In order to proceed with the data analysis, the data were reduced so that it only included the respondents who completed at least 98% of the relevant survey questions. This resulted in a sample consisting of 72 respondents. For those respondents who were not included in the final sample ($n = 35$; 32.7%), 22 of them accessed the survey but only viewed it. There were 10 people who dropped out of the survey after only finishing the first page, and 3 people who completed between 73%-90% of the questions given.

4.3 PARENT SES

The survey collected information on parental socioeconomic status which was deemed to be an independent variable. The study sought to investigate whether there was a correlation between parental SES, parental self-efficacy and parental involvement. Parental levels of income,

education, and eligibility for children to receive free and reduced lunch were all recorded in the survey as potential measures of SES. Of all these items, eligibility to receive free or reduced lunch was the most appropriate indicator of SES. This decision was based upon the demographic makeup of the overall sample. It was observed that a parent's household income may be affected by the overall number of parents and children living in the residence, as well as the age of parent completing the survey. To overcome this factor necessitates determining the appropriate numerical threshold for low and high SES. This determination would have required an in-depth multivariate analysis with a more homogeneous and larger sample than that from which the data were gathered. It was also difficult to determine the impact respondent educational levels could be used as an indicator of SES, since these data were reported for both male and female respondents of various ages, coming from varied living arrangements (See Table 15, Appendix B). Unlike these indicators, the eligibility to receive a free and reduced lunch was the most appropriate SES indicator. Whether a child is eligible to receive a free or reduced lunch is a dichotomous variable and provides enough variability to use in the research. This makes the qualification free and reduced lunch eligibility the most appropriate SES indicator for this study.

4.4 PARENT SELF-EFFICACY

In order to answer the first research question "How do parents perceive their own self-efficacy to work with their children on their learning at the secondary level?" a contingency table was created that measured the response rate of the sample on the answer scale. Parental self-efficacy was measured on a scale of 1-5. Parents were asked a series of questions regarding how they view

their ability to learn a new task, take on new challenges, overcome difficulties and persevere with a task should it become challenging. These questions were based on Bandura's (1977) research on how people develop self-efficacy. The frequencies of the parent responses can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Parent General Self-efficacy Frequencies

Item #	Indicator	Frequency of response					Median value
		Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Dis./Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	
1	I can master a new skill if I get to practice it myself	2	–	2	36	44	5
2	I am comfortable trying new activities	2	2	7	47	26	4
3	I can help my child get better grades	3	1	14	41	25	4
4	I will keep working on a hard job even if I have to struggle to complete it	2	–	3	40	39	4
5	I will take on a new challenge if I am encouraged	2	1	4	49	28	4
6	I will try a new task if someone shows me how to do it	2	1	6	40	35	4
7	I believe my child's teachers are better able to help my child with school work than I am	5	6	26	32	15	4

The distribution of the responses on the self-efficacy scale created a skewed data distribution, resulting in a non-normal distribution. This can be seen in Figure 7:

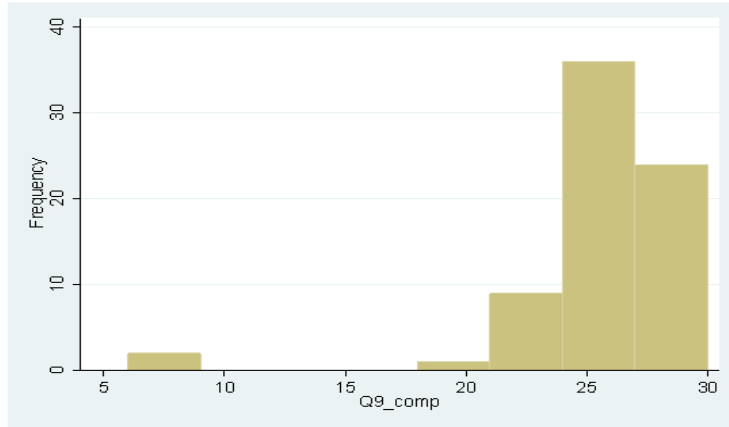


Figure 7. Distribution of self-efficacy responses.

A composite variable representing parental self-efficacy was arrived at utilizing the Spearman *Rho* correlation test to measure the correlation between the ranked self-efficacy indicators. Spearman *Rho* was used because these individual components are ordinal-categorical variables. Table 8 depicts the Spearman *Rho* self-efficacy correlations:

Table 8: *Spearman Rho Correlations for Parental Self-efficacy Indicator Items (n = 72)*

Item #	Item #						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	–						
2	.52	–					
3	.14	.35	–				
4	.46	.52	.33	–			
5	.43	.53	.36	.57	–		
6	.52	.45	.26	.51	.58	–	
7	.17	.22	-.06	.22	.06	.18	–

Note. Significant correlations ($p < .05$) are displayed in bold italics. (See Table 7: Parent General Self-efficacy frequencies table for item stems.)

Item #7 was the question that read “*I believe my child’s teachers are better able to help my child with school work than I am.*” This item was excluded from the creation of the self-efficacy

composite variable as it was found not to be significantly correlated with any of the other self-efficacy items (See Table 7). The remaining six items were added together to create a composite indicator of parental self-efficacy, resulting in an integer ranging from 6 to 30 ($Mean = 25.1$, $SD = 4.1$, $n = 72$). The resulting composite variable for self-efficacy was able to be treated as a continuous independent variable for measurement because the adjustment made the responses normally distributed.

Although item #7 was excluded from the creation of the self-efficacy composite variable, the responses show that 37% of the respondents are not sure whether they or their child's teacher are better able to help their child at school. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents believed the teacher was better able to help their child attain better grades. As this question asked parents about their beliefs regarding the capabilities of the teacher rather than their own self-efficacy, it was found to be ambiguous. The parent responses may reflect an area where many feel they have little self-efficacy with their own abilities to help their tenth grade child with schoolwork. It may also reflect the parents' trust in the instructional abilities of their children's teachers.

The Shapiro-Wilk test was utilized to demonstrate the normality of parent involvement and the self-efficacy composite variables, both of which are continuous. The Shapiro-Wilk test helped to determine whether the variables met the assumptions for parametric tests for the population distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk $W(72) = 0.67$, $p < .05$ confirmed this to be non-normal distribution. However, dropping the two low outlier responses ($X = 6$, see Figure 7) sufficiently normalized the distribution. Shapiro-Wilk $W(72) = 0.67$, $p = .08$. After the outlying data were removed, variances of self-efficacy scores were approximately equal between High and Low SES categories, Brown-Forsythe $F(1,67) = 1.13$, $p = 0.29$.

4.5 PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Research question two asked what types of parental involvement activities parents engage in at the secondary level. This question was addressed by the closed-ended questions 10-15 on the survey. To investigate this phenomenon more fully, the responses were broken down by individual involvement activities and frequency with which parents engage in each activity. The data was classified as either dichotomous responses or categorical responses on a scale. The data provided informed the investigator of the types and frequency of parental involvement activities that parents engage in at the secondary level. Figures 8 and 9 depict both the type and frequencies of parent involvement activities that parents undertake. The figures show the types of discussions parents have with both their children and their children's teachers, as well as activities they engage in at home.

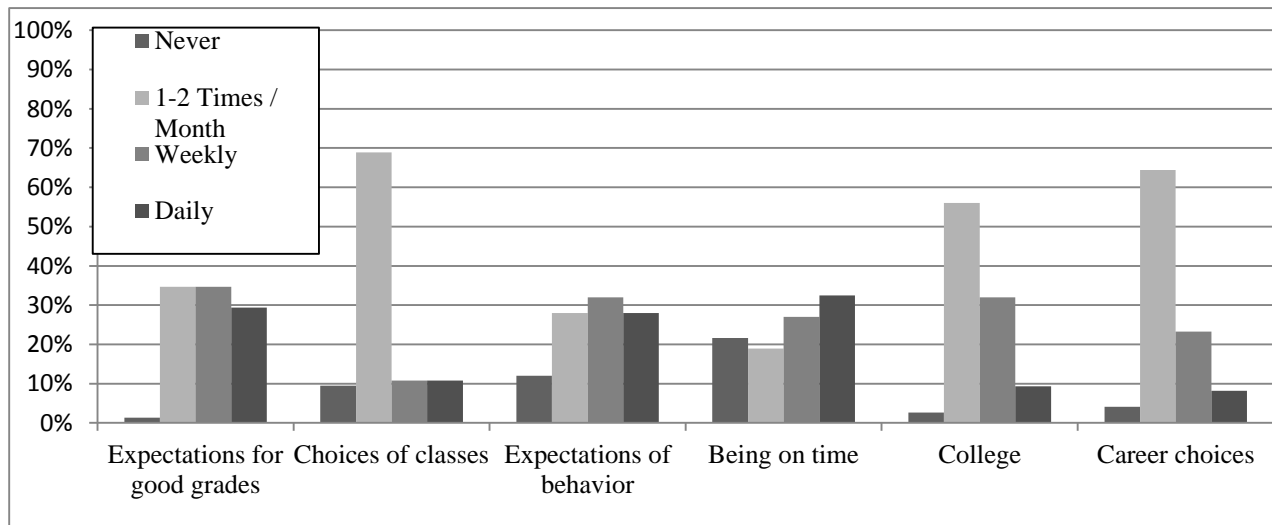


Figure 8. Discussions parents have with their children.

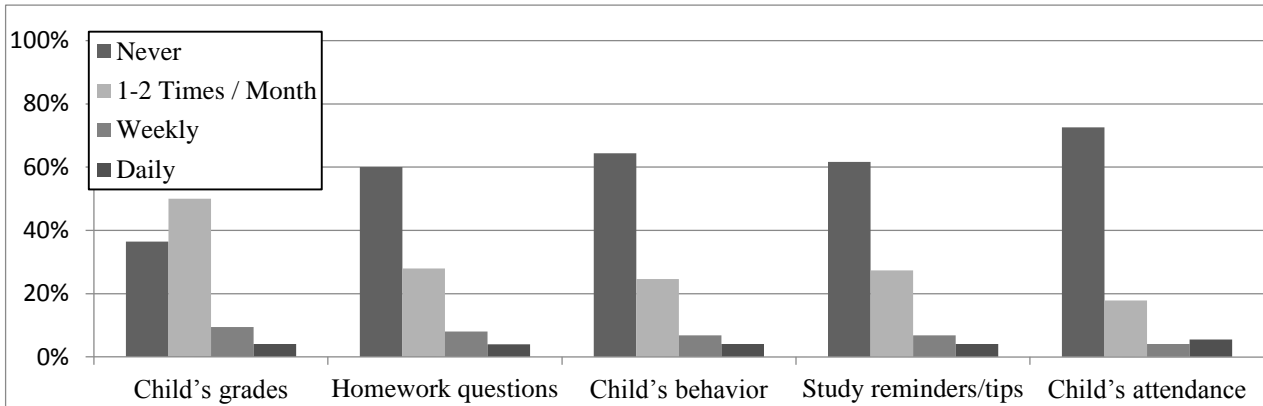


Figure 9. Discussions parents have with teachers.

The type and frequency of discussions parents have with their teachers and children demonstrates the discrepancy between how parents establish expectations and standards of behavior for their children at home and what they share with their teachers at school. Sixty four percent of the parents surveyed indicated that they spoke to their children either daily or weekly about grades. Another 35% of parents indicated they spoke to their children once or twice a month about grade expectations. In total, 99% of respondents discuss their expectations for good grades with their children on a regular basis. Apparently, parents are very concerned about their children's academic progress and consistently discuss it with them. This contrasts with the 13% of parents who indicated that they speak with their child's teacher daily or monthly about their grades. This may give teachers the impression that because more parents do not contact them daily or weekly about grades that parents are ambivalent about their children's academics when that is not the case. When parents do contact teachers, the three main areas that they want to discuss are grades, homework, and study tips. At the secondary level, this tends to occur more on a monthly basis than a daily or weekly basis. It should be noted that 60% of parents never contact their children's teachers about homework and 62% of parents never contact their children's teachers about grades. It may reflect the age of the child and the parent's belief that the child

should be responsible as a 10th grader to handle homework and study questions on his or her own. It may also reflect that the child is doing well enough in school that the parent does not need to contact the teacher on such a frequent basis.

The survey responses show that parents have discussions with their children on their post-graduate plans. Eighty eight percent of parents indicated that they spoke to their children about college on at least a monthly or weekly basis; with 87% of parents indicating that they discuss career choices with their children at the same frequency. This suggests that parents are very concerned about the connection between school and career, and that they emphasize these items with their children regularly.

The survey also indicates that parents are still concerned with their children's behavior. Sixty percent of parents surveyed stated they spoke with their children about behavioral expectations either daily or weekly, with another 28% of parents responding that they speak to their children about their behavior 1-2 times a month. In contrast, 64% of parents surveyed indicated that they never spoke with their teacher about behavior. This represents another example of how parents are involved with the learning of their children out of the purview of the teachers because it takes place outside of the normal scope of the school day.

Most of the parents indicated that they have discussions on topics of grades, classes, behavior, college and career with their children but do not have these same discussions with the same frequency with their child's teacher. This does not mean that the parent is uninvolved with their child's teacher. It may reflect both a parent's belief that the older child needs to assume more responsibility for his or her education and the child's desire to have the parent help. These items may differ from parents of elementary children who may contact their child's teacher on a more frequent basis.

Similar to discussions about expectations for academics and behavior that are held at home, much of the parent involvement with learning activities takes place at home also. As with the types of discussions, much of this involvement may stem from not only the parent's perception of the needs of the child, but also from the child's desire to have the parent provide help. By the time that they are adolescents, children may be trying to develop their own identity and independence. Part of this development may entail their completing assignments on their own without outside help from their parents. Table 9 depicts the types and frequency of activities in which parent participate with their children.

Table 9: *Parent Involvement With Learning at Home Activities*

<u>Type of activity</u>		<u>Frequency</u>			
Helped child:	Never	1-2 Times/Month	Weekly	Daily	
Study for a test	41%	39%	17%	3%	
Check homework	46%	32%	12%	9%	
Write a report	45%	51%	3%	1%	
Practice vocabulary	56%	32%	7%	5%	
Read a difficult paragraph	57%	35%	5%	3%	
Find information	19%	64%	15%	3%	
Operate a computer	65%	26%	5%	4%	

It is interesting to note that 59% of parents help their children study for tests on a monthly, weekly or daily basis. One might assume that as the child ages, parents are less involved with test preparation. Parents may be more involved in that area than might be supposed, possibly being a reflection of the increase in standardized testing resulting from the No Child Left Behind statute and the implementation of the Keystone Exams. An increase in parent assistance with studying for tests may underscore the current emphasis placed on testing as well as the recognition that

student performance on tests is something that can help a child get into a school of his or her choice after graduation.

It is also interesting to note that while 65% of parents indicate that they never help their child operate a computer, 64% indicated that they help their children find information on at least a monthly basis (This is presuming that the computer would be a main tool to help the child find that information). These two statements seem to contradict each other. It is also interesting to note that in the areas of language arts, nearly half of all parents surveyed indicated that they never help their child write a report and over 50% of the respondents stated they never help their child read a difficult paragraph or practice vocabulary. The decline could be the result of students having mastered reading and writing skills by the time they became sophomores or a shift in curriculum in which vocabulary and reading cease to be taught as separate subjects. It could also reflect upon the reading ability of the parent, of whom the student may have already surpassed.

4.5.1 Parent Involvement in School Activities Variables

The survey employed several questions to evaluate parent involvement. Two different response scales were used when parents were responding to questions: dichotomous and ordinal frequency. These questions were formatted in a way that parents could respond either yes or no for questions 10, 14, and 15 on the survey or they could indicate the frequency with which they participated in a type of parental involvement activity for questions 11, 12, and 13. In order to maintain consistency when reporting the responses, some item responses had to be converted to dichotomous variables in order to maintain consistent weight among all indicator variables. For this process, frequency items (see Table 10) were recoded to correspond to dichotomous variables

of Never and Ever. The word “Never” refers to the stated response category, while “Ever” combines all other response categories. Dichotomous indicators remained as originally reported. Indicator variables were then summed (Yes or Ever = 1, all other responses = 0) to create a composite integer corresponding to the overall number of indicators endorsed. The composite variable for parent involvement was approximately normally distributed, Shapiro-Wilk $W(72) = .097, p = .14$, and the variances were approximately equal among high and low SES groups. The Brown-Forsythe $F(1,69) = 0.02, p = 0.90$.

Table 10: *Dichotomous Indicators of Parent Involvement Categories of Supplies in the Home (Parenting) and Parent Involvement in School Activities (Shared decision-making)*

Indicator	Frequency of response		
	Yes	No	Not Offered
Availability of supplies in the home(Parenting)			
Pencil or pen	75	–	
Writing paper	74	1	
Dictionary	72	3	
Home computer	71	4	
Calculator	74	–	
Quiet study area	72	3	
Parent Involvement in School Activities (Shared decision making)			
School principal advisory council	3	45	27
Education committee with teachers	6	43	26
School governance committee	4	47	24
Student activity committee	12	40	22
Parent-teacher group	9	54	12
Sports booster group	30	42	2
Classroom volunteer	7	45	22
School event chaperone	26	38	11
Parent-teacher conference attendee	50	19	6

4.5.2 Parent Participation in Shared Decision-Making Groups

Parents were asked whether they participate in any school group that may influence how the organization operates, such as serving on various school committees. Under the Epstein model, this falls under the shared decision making category. In the survey, 47 respondents indicated that they were not involved in any school governance committee. Surprisingly, 24 different respondents also indicated that their schools did not offer the opportunity to be involved in that format. Similarly, those parents who indicated that they were not involved in an education committee with teachers or a principal advisory committee numbered 43 and 45 respectively. Many parents stated that their schools did not have forums where parents could provide input into decisions that affect instruction or school operations, as can be seen in Figure 10.

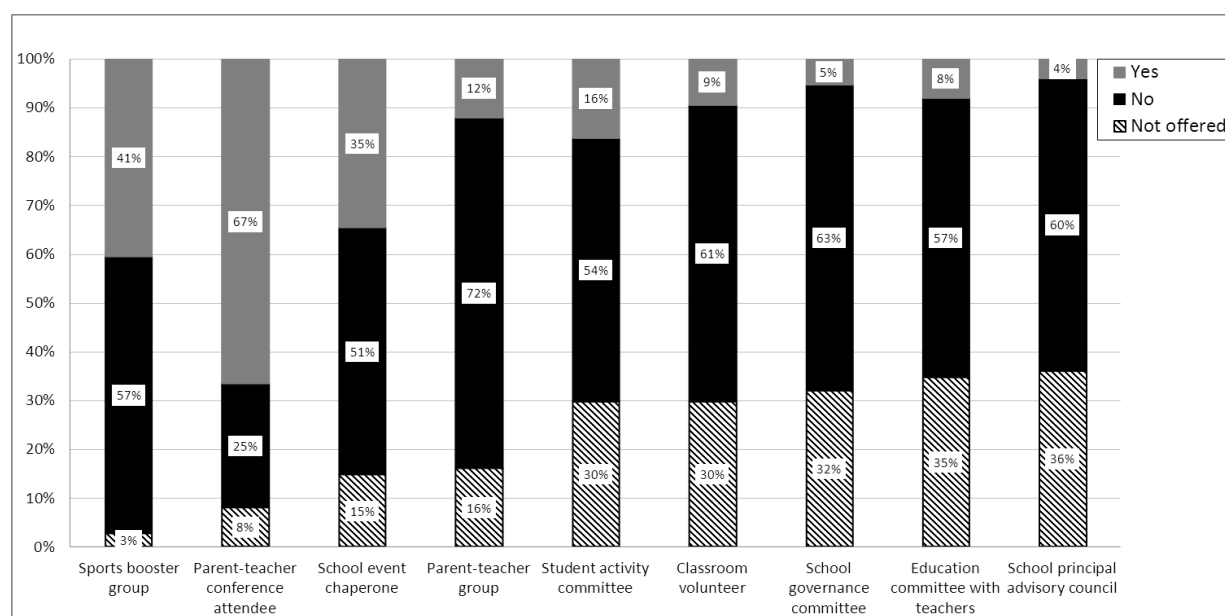


Figure 10. Parent involvement in school activities.

As with many schools lacking a school governance committee, schools may not offer principal advisory or education committee opportunities for parents either. In the open-ended

question, several parents indicated their desire to see schools provide more forums for parents to have the opportunity to meet with teachers. One parent stressed the need to meet by stating “School staff MUST initiate personal contact the moment they become aware of an academic issue and before poor study habits form.”

It is interesting to note that most schools participating in the study offer sports booster groups as a way to be involved with athletics; only 3% of parents indicated that their schools did not offer these groups. The question could be asked if this suggests that more parents at the secondary level are more concerned with having their opinion heard about athletics than academics? Would more people be demanding a football booster group than a school governance committee if neither were offered by the school?

Of the parents surveyed, 27 indicated their school did not offer a principal advisory committee and 26 noted the same for an education committee with teachers. From the responses, it may be that the lack of a forum for parent involvement in shared decision making at the secondary level serves to depress parent involvement. Parents may just assume that their school does not desire their involvement and that is the reason these forums do not exist. Creating opportunities for shared decision-making and school governance may help educators to increase parent involvement at their buildings.

4.6 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENT SES, SELF-EFFICACY, AND INVOLVEMENT

Research question three sought to determine whether a relationship exists between parental self-efficacy and parental SES. A between-subjects ANCOVA test was run to determine the influence of SES and self-efficacy on parental involvement and the interaction between SES and self-efficacy. The ANCOVA test was an effective test to run as the composite variables met the statistical assumptions of the test (i.e., normality, equal variances between groups). The model used parental involvement score as a continuous dependent variable, SES as a dichotomous categorical independent variable (i.e., comparing between high and low SES groups) and self-efficacy as a continuous covariate. The overall model detected no significant relationship among variables, $F(3,65) = 31.11, p = .70, R^2 = 0.02$. Since there was no significant linear relationship among overall measures of parent involvement, SES, and self-efficacy, non-parametric Fisher's Exact tests of association were performed to determine if particular indicators of parent involvement were related to SES variables. Fisher's Exact test was used because these dichotomous SES variables are categorical. These tests discerned the proportional difference between high and low SES in the area of owning a computer, with the parents of high SES more likely to own one than parents from a low SES background. Table 11 depicts the results from the Fisher's Exact test:

Table 11: *Significant Associations Between SES and Individual Parent Involvement Indicators*
($n = 69$)

Indicator	Fisher's Exact p
Computer at home	.006
Communicate about child's attendance to teacher	.028
Discuss expectations of behavior with child	.040
Help child write a report	.038

Additionally, t tests were performed to determine if there were relationships between individual response items of parent involvement and self-efficacy. These exploratory tests were used as an additional means of inquiry since the ANCOVA did not detect any significant relationships among the composite variables. The t tests were used to determine whether there were differences between self-efficacy composite scores and levels of dichotomous parent involvement indicators. The t tests examined the overall self-efficacy score as a continuous variable. The significant t test found that the mean self-efficacy score for 'yes computer' was higher than the score for 'no computer'. Having a computer at home significantly predicted composite parent self-efficacy score, $t(68) = 3.13$, $p = .002$. Having a computer at home was related to higher self-efficacy ($Mean = 25.8$, $SD = 2.38$) when compared to four respondents who indicated that they did not have a computer ($Mean = 22.0$, $SD = 2.16$). However, what makes this relationship tenuous is that the number of people who did not have a computer was only four. The t tests were performed on the other individual parent involvement indicators and the self-efficacy composite variable to see if there was a correlation between these variables. None of the results

from these tests produced data that were statistically significant at $p < .05$. Only the correlation between a parent owning a computer correlated with a parent's self-efficacy.

These additional tests of the composite variables helped bolster the results of the ANCOVA, ensuring that the composites were adequate constructs of the concepts being tested.

4.7 PARENT INPUT AND OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Questions 16, 17, and 18 focused on aspects of parent involvement that were not expressly asked in the closed-ended questions. These are the open-ended questions on the survey. They attempt to answer the research question "What do parents want educators to do to help them improve their self-efficacy with helping their children with learning activities?" The open-ended responses were examined using a comparative analysis method, reviewing the statements line by line. Open coding was utilized to examine phrases and identify categories. Strauss & Corbin (1998) note that with open coding, categories can be identified by comparing information from each response to a question. Once identified from the responses, the established categories were then applied to all the open-ended responses. Subcategories were derived through the use of axial coding, which identified specific words and phrases from the categories describe specific attributes of the category, including the frequency of an action taking place and the particular item being described.

Using open and axial coding, each category identified was placed in a table, with the statements listed on the side of the graph that accompanies the chart. Through analysis of these responses concepts about parental involvement at the secondary level emerged. Strauss and Corbin (1998) noted that in cases involving interpretation of respondent statements theoretical

sampling may be used to identify those concepts that have relevancy to the research question being investigated. Theoretical sampling was utilized to identify recurring ideas and concerns from statements provided by respondents in order to enumerate their frequency and importance.

Concept matrixes were created to chart the concepts identified through the microanalytic line by line analysis of question responses. These matrixes are represented by Tables 12, 13, and 14.

Table 12: *How Would You Describe Your Involvement With Your Child's Education?*

Category	Sub Category # 1	Sub Category #2	Sub Category #3	Sub Category #4	Sub Category #5
Students do not want help	Child is independent/responsible	Child gets upset when parent helps	Child reluctant to talk about school	Parent involvement varies by child	Student refuses help
School does nothing	No replies to questions	Teachers not accountable	No papers come home		
Parent involvement frequency varies	Parents become involved if they see child struggling	Parent involve-ment ebbs and flows with projects, not constant	Parent involvement could increase with teacher request	There is little opportunity for parents to become involved	
Communicate with school	Parent initiates contact if problem arises-academic/behavior	Email helps with parents with working schedules	Talk to teachers and coaches informally at school		
Discuss with child	Parent asks about tests	Parent asks about homework	Parent nags student to do homework		
Meet with teachers	Parents attend conferences	IEP/504 meetings	See teachers at work		
Check grades	Parents use web portals	Know when assignments are due	Parents use frequently-daily	Grade portals help working parents with busy schedules	
Attend school functions	Parents attend sports	Parent attend music events	Parents attend conferences		

Table 13: *What Does Your Child's School Do to Help You to Be Involved With Your Child's Learning?*

Category	Sub Category #1	Sub Category #2	Sub Category #3	Sub Category #4	Sub Category #5
The school does nothing	My child does not need help	School does not encourage parent involvement	Parent has to specifically ask	School does not offer format for parents to become involved	The teacher feels that providing reminders of work should not be done with high school students and would be enabling
Communication	School offers web portal/Edline/Wiki pages	Email	Phone call	Send reports home	
Teachers are helpful	Teachers maintain websites	Teachers respond to email	Most teachers are willing to help if asked	Teachers help to challenge child	
Meetings	School has annual Open House	Annual IEP	Annual parent conferences	Events-Scholar breakfast	

Table 14: *What Can the School Do That It Is Not Currently Doing to Help You Increase Your Involvement With Your Child's Learning?*

Category	Sub Category #1	Sub Category #2	Sub Category #3	Sub Category #4	Sub Category #5	Sub Category #6	Sub Category #7
Communi- cation	Email- weekly	Notices home	Helps parent to frame involve- ment	Call parents as soon as a problem occurs	Feedback beyond grades from teacher	Need to elaborate on issues	Do parents know what to ask for?
Access Grades	Up to date websites, real- time grades	Reinforces parental Control- parents have no control over classwork	Informs parents of child's needs	Parent involvement ebbs and flows by assignment	Grades enable parents to better help children, to keep them from falling behind	If parent had to initial work, they would see it and force child to work	Test notification
Parent Confer- ences	More frequent- more regular	Parent conferences help to frame discussion of student academics	Seek input from parents	Parents meet for IEP	Parents appreciate being able to meet with teachers	More recognition breakfasts for scholars, not just athletes	
Schools could offer services	Schools should offer academic based extra- curricular activities	Classes have been cut that students need	Provide programs that are based on student interests	Offer Tutors	Incorporate strategies for fun learning activities	Go beyond testing	

4.8 KEY FINDINGS

The findings from the study shed light on the nature of parent involvement at the secondary level, as well as the relationship between self-efficacy and parent involvement. The insight from these questions may inform educators in their creation and development of parent involvement programs. This section discusses these findings.

4.8.1 Parent Perceptions of Their Own Self-efficacy

The first of the research questions that formed the core of this study sought to determine how parents perceive their own self-efficacy with helping their children with schoolwork. Using criteria established by Albert Bandura (1977), parents rated their comfort level with components of developing self-efficacy such as learning to master a new task on a scale of 1-5 with a “1” representing an inability to master a task and a “5” representing the ability to master a new task with ease. Of the parents surveyed, 80 indicated that they were able to master a task with little or no trouble by responding either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” in the response selections. Marking “Strongly Agree” or “Agree,” 73 respondents indicated that they were comfortable trying new activities. Similarly, 77 respondents marked “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that they would take on a new task when encouraged. Because of the overwhelming responses in the “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” categories, there was a skewed distribution of data. Very few if any parents indicated that they were not able to take on new tasks, master them, and overcome challenges while working at them. These responses suggest that parents feel confident that they can adapt to new tasks and that they respond well to encouragement to do so. This may imply that parents would be able to respond well to parent trainings by the school designed to increase their involvement with learning activities. Their strong self-efficacy could provide the school with leverage to increase parent participation with the school.

When self-efficacy was correlated with parental SES, there seemed to be no difference between SES categories with how parents view their own degree of self-efficacy with learning a new task. Parents from both higher and lower SES levels indicated that they are willing and able to tackle a new task whether they actively partake in performing the task, see it being modeled, or

are encouraged to learn the task. They also have equal capacity to persevere with a challenging task until it is finished. This lack of differentiation between SES and parental self-efficacy in learning new tasks suggests that parents of any socioeconomic classes would benefit from the introduction of a new skill set and would be willing to work with an instructor to develop that skill.

4.8.2 Types of Parent Involvement Activities

The survey asked respondents to indicate which types of parent involvement activities they engage in with their children. As these are parents of adolescent children, their responses may be reflective of the age of the child. Adolescents who are developing their own identity may choose to work on their own rather than to ask for assistance from their parents. Because of this, many parents indicated that their child works on school assignments with little or any parent involvement. Unlike younger children, parents may pay more attention to the wants of the adolescent child regarding help. Several parents indicated in the open questions that they only help their child when the child asks. In addition, parents may believe that allowing students to work on their own reinforces responsibility and helps to foster self-regulation behaviors on the part of the children. Steinberg (2014) noted that an adolescent's ability to self-regulate may be the most important determinant as to whether that student attains academic success. Because of these two items, parents may supervise their child's work with much less frequency than that of a younger child. One parent echoed that sentiment in the open-ended response by stating "I assist but leave a level of independence also for the child to learn decision making and consequences of slacking off."

Parents may also view involvement as a matter of need. Survey respondents indicated that they may become more involved if there is an upcoming difficult assignment or test and less

involved if the assignment is something that their child believes he or she can easily do. Rather than a constant activity, parent involvement with the adolescent may vary depending on the work involved. Parents become academic relief pitchers, coming in to help the child save the game when it is late in the game and a tough assignment is coming up. One parent described her involvement as being “Somewhat active, if I see that my child is struggling” Another added, “My involvement is required only when I feel that her interests are not being met.”

Of all the parent engagement activities described by Joyce Epstein (1986), parents of secondary students participated mostly in activities that occurred outside of the school. These activities are basic parenting, communication with the school, and learning at home. In the area of basic parenting, 74 out of 75 parents indicated on the closed-ended questions that they provided their children with all the material support they need to perform in school. In the open-ended responses, ten parents indicated their use of a computer as a basic parenting component they use to be involved with school. One parent stated “We have provided him with all the tools necessary to complete his studies” Parents indicated that they were able to provide their children with the basic tools students need for learning at home activities, such as pens, paper, computers, and a quiet place to study.

In the second area parent involvement, communication, parents indicated they communicated with their children and their children’s teachers. Both forms of communication are undertaken by parents to help their children succeed in school. Setting expectations for academics and discussing school is an integral way that parents communicate with their children at home. Many parents indicated that they set expectations for their children on a weekly and even daily basis in those areas that reinforce academic success. As noted earlier, 98% of parents surveyed regularly discuss the importance of good grades with their children. Eighty-eight percent of

parents surveyed discussed the importance of proper behavior to their children and 78% of parents discussed the importance of being on time. Parents also regularly discussed the importance of planning for life after high school, with 73 out of 75 parents discussing college and 70 out of 73 parents discussing careers with their children. These figures reflect behaviors by over 95% of parents surveyed.

Besides having discussions with their children, parents indicated that they also valued communication with the school. Sixty-three percent of parent respondents noted that they regularly communicated with teachers about their child's grades. Another 40% of parents surveyed indicated that they contacted teachers about homework, and 38% of parents surveyed contact teachers regarding study tips and reminders for their children. This suggests that parents continue to be involved with the supervision of their children's academic progress and that they are concerned about their children's performance. The area that they communicated with the school the least about was their child's attendance. This may not reflect a sense of apathy on the parents' behalf concerning attendance but rather an expectation that their child attends on a regular basis, with any attendance issues addressed at home.

Regardless of SES, parents stressed the importance of having the ability to have good communication between the school and home noting that such ability is vital to their being able to help their children. Parents also stressed the importance of the capability to monitor student grades through an online portal as being necessary to help maintain pace with their children's academic progress to determine when to seek help if their child begins to struggle or falter in any subject area. One parent even suggested to "Put all info online-list test scores, homework scores, homework assignments, test study guides. Teachers should notify by email parents that there

might be issues- not doing homework, doing bad on tests.” This parent was not the only one who shared this sentiment among those surveyed.

Another form of communication as per Epstein’s model is parent attendance at teacher conferences. Out of 75 parents who responded to the question, 50 stated that they attended parent conferences with 19 stating that they did not attend conferences, and 6 stating that their schools do not offer conferences. Parents value communication with the school particularly in the area of their child’s grades and assignments. This communication helps the parents to improve their ability to monitor their child’s progress. From the open-ended questions, parents indicated that they depend on teachers to answer questions, make suggestions for work, and provide feedback on completed student work. Axial coding also revealed that parents viewed frequent communication with teachers as a way for them to better support the teacher and reinforce learning at home.

With the form of communication, parents overwhelmingly relied on online communications from teachers to learn about their own children. In addition, parents often cited email as the means of communication more often used than phone calls or paper letters sent home. This could reflect a changing status among parents in that more parents are now connected online and use that connectivity to communicate more regularly than past generations of parents had.

The third type of parent involvement that parents responded they participate in on a regular basis was learning at home activities. Eighty-one percent of parents surveyed noted that the item that they helped their children with the most monthly was finding information, 47 out of 74 respondents. The next areas that parents helped their children on a monthly basis were writing reports (38 out of 74 respondents), studying for a test (29 out of 75 respondents) reading a difficult paragraph (26 out of 74 respondents), checking homework (24 out of 74 respondents), and practicing vocabulary (24 out of 74 respondents). The percentages increase when weekly and

daily activities are added to these numbers. The area that parents provided the least amount of help to their adolescent was operating a computer. Like communication, learning at home activities were more likely to occur on a monthly rather than a weekly or daily basis.

In the open-ended questions, parent respondents stressed that student grades are very important to them. Monitoring student grades may be the most important parent engagement activity that parents do. The ability to monitor online grade books is greatly appreciated by those parents in schools who have such online portals and greatly desired by those parents in schools who do not. One parent described this by stating “Email alerts for tests that children struggle with or when homework is consistently not turned in would be a few helpful tools for parents to stay informed.” For parents who work long shifts, the ability to check grades online any time may help them to know what assignments their child has to complete and what date to complete it by. This monitoring may help them to ascertain when difficult assignments are coming up and allow them to make time to help their child with his or her schoolwork.

The dichotomous and frequency response items, as well as the open-ended question responses showed that parents are more involved with their teenager’s learning than they may be given credit for. It may be that these activities are less frequent than they are for an elementary student, but that may be a reflection of the age of the student and the complexity and duration of the assignments. These responses, however, may only reflect this particular group of respondents rather the entire population studied.

4.8.3 Relationships Among Self-efficacy, Parent Involvement, and SES

To answer the third research question pertaining to a parent's degree of self-efficacy with learning activities and SES, the distribution of parent responses on the self-efficacy matrix question indicated that all parents regardless of SES viewed themselves as having high self-efficacy. Their responses created a skewed data distribution.

When an ANCOVA was performed on composite variables of parent involvement, self-efficacy and SES, no significant relationship among them was found to exist. This lends support to the null hypothesis that posited that there is no relationship between self-efficacy, parent involvement, and parental socioeconomic status. It seems that in terms of parent involvement, a parent's SES plays little or no role in whether a parent engages with his or her child with learning activities. Educators then should not presume that parents coming from an impoverished neighborhood would be any less engaged with their child than would a parent from a wealthier neighborhood.

When individual components of dichotomous parent involvement variables and self-efficacy were compared to each other, one significant relationship emerged. There was a correlation between a parent owning a home computer and a parent's sense of self-efficacy. This may reflect upon the degree of a parent's computer literacy and degree of self-efficacy. Whether or not a parent owns a computer may be an indicator to educators that the parent has a strong sense of self-efficacy and that this self-efficacy could be built upon by the school to increase parent involvement. This result also suggests that individual parent involvement activities may be better indicators to determine a correlation between self-efficacy and parent involvement than comparing composites.

4.8.4 What Do Parents Want Educators to Do to Improve Their Self-efficacy

This fourth research question sought parental input on what they thought the school could do to help them improve their degree of self-efficacy with learning activities. The responses from the parents in the open-ended questions suggest that parents want schools to help them increase their abilities to help their child. The means by which parents indicated that they wanted to do that was by communication. Email, online access to grades, and additional opportunities to meet with teachers were the three forms of communication 68% of parents surveyed indicated that they wanted. At the secondary level, parents may not desire additional help from the school to help their children with homework. Instead, they want to be able to keep abreast of their child's grades and behavior so that they can intervene with help sooner. As one parent noted on the open-ended response "Children at this age do not tell parents what homework they have nor do they tell parents when they struggle on tests." Another parent added "I believe weekly emails to parents would help keep everyone in the loop on the child's learning, behavior, and possible learning assistance, if needed." Communication may help to build parental self-efficacy, in that it can inform them of student progress to the degree that parents can better monitor their children knowing what the expectations for student work are. It can also help set the stage for future discussions around establishing academic and behavioral goals for the student.

As noted earlier, many parents welcome having more conference with teachers. One parent lamented, "We only have one parent-teacher conference all year, and it is relatively early in the school year- I'd like to have at least one more." Another parent suggests that schools "Offer more opportunities throughout the school year for teachers and parents to come together for open communication." Some parents, however, indicated that they have a perception that teachers do

not want to work with them. One parent stated that schools should “Ask for and listen to input from parents.” Another parent responded that teachers need to “be more receptive to communication and requests for progress/grade details.” When parents responded to the open-ended question “What does your child’s school do to help you to be involved with your child’s learning” 19 out of 67 respondents replied that the teachers do not help them. That number represents 28% of the respondents. These response numbers and comments infer that parents may perceive teachers as unwilling to hear their concerns or to meet with them as partners. This perception could serve to hinder communication between school and home and depress parent involvement.

Many parents stated they want to meet with teachers and communicate with them. When asked to identify activities undertaken at high school, 50 out of 75 parents indicated they attended parent conferences; 66% of the parents polled. This compares with the 19 parents who indicated that they did not attend parent conferences and 6 parents who indicated that their schools did not offer parent conferences at the secondary level. It seems that the ability of parents to meet with teachers and talk to them is something that the majority of parents surveyed deem important.

Despite some parents’ ability to know what they would like schools to do to increase their self-efficacy with learning activities, 8 parents on the survey indicated that they did not know what the school could do. If they are unsure of what to ask of the school, these parents may not ask anything, reinforcing a perception that they do not care about their children’s education. This could create a disconnect between the school and the home, resulting in an inability by the school to provide students with services they need to succeed. Educators may want to make a more concerted effort to reach out to these parents to engage them and seek their input. As indicated by their responses on self-efficacy, these parents have the confidence to participate in activities

designed to help them adopt a new and challenging task. If educators can provide a means and opportunity for the parents to come out to school to meet with them, they may be able to increase and improve that involvement.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study researched parent involvement at the secondary level noting the effect both parental self-efficacy and socioeconomic status had on that involvement. The research relied on a self-administered survey to gather data. At no time during the data gathering period was there any direct contact between the researcher and the subjects. This lack of contact left the subjects all alone to complete the survey. The following section delineates limitations to the research results.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The intent of the study was to investigate whether there was a correlation between self-efficacy and parent involvement. Parents were asked to identify how strong their sense of self-efficacy was with learning activities, what types of parent involvement activities they engage in, and what they think the school could do to help them increase their level of involvement and self-efficacy. Their level of self-efficacy was also compared against their socioeconomic status to determine if there was any correlation between the two variables. While the specific indicator of whether a student qualified for a free and reduced lunch was used to gauge SES, composite variables of self-efficacy and parent involvement were derived from the survey responses. These variables were then analyzed to see if there was a correlation among them. After the analysis, no

correlation could be determined among the three variables. However, when individual components of parent involvement were examined with additional tests with the self-efficacy variable, a correlation between owning a computer and a person having a high sense of self-efficacy did emerge.

Self-efficacy and SES were analyzed to see if there was a correlation between the two. As with the composite variables, no correlation was detected. Parents from all SES backgrounds rated themselves as having high self-efficacy in being able to learn new tasks, overcome challenges, and help their children. This suggests that regardless of income or educational level, all parents feel confident in their own capability to learn and help their children.

This study also asked parents to identify the types of involvement activities they take part in and the frequency with which they undertake them. These activities were categorized into parent activity types derived from Joyce Epstein's (1995) framework. Of those categories, parents participate in basic parenting provisions and skills, communication, and learning at home activities mostly on a monthly or a weekly basis. Parents did not indicate that they volunteered much at the secondary level, which may reflect a decrease in activities such as class parties, field trips or guest reader activities where the parent may come in to help a teacher with the activity. Similarly, many parents indicated that they did not participate in shared school governance activities. Several of those parents clarified that the reason they did not participate was that a forum for shared governance was not provided for them at the secondary level.

Lastly, the dissertation sought parent input on what actions the school could take to help parents improve their level of involvement. Many parents indicated that they would like to see the school provide them with more venues for communication and the opportunity to review student grades and teacher lesson plans online. Through these means, they are looking for the school to

help provide them with the structure to improve their supervision of their children and to better support the teacher.

The responses from the parents showed that they continue to be involved with their children's education at the secondary level, though the frequency and type of involvement differ from that of elementary parents. The frequencies of the types of behaviors may reflect differences between parenting practices of parents with elementary-aged children versus parents of secondary-aged children, but they cover similar areas on Epstein's (1995) matrix. Unlike elementary students, parent involvement may depend on the level of the child's desire to have parents help. Parents may also hold back on helping their adolescent children in all but absolutely necessary situations as a way to foster independence in their children.

Like self-efficacy, parents of all SES backgrounds participate in many of the same parent involvement activities at the same frequency, so that it was difficult to differentiate from the sample if parent involvement varied among these groups. Respondents indicated that they all provided conditions at home that were conducive to learning, including space to study and materials to use for school. Respondents also indicated that they establish expectations for behavior, good grades, college, career, and punctuality for their children. In the open-ended response questions, parents indicated that they spent much time discussing the importance of school and the impact of doing well in school upon future college and career choices. This supports findings that parents' communication of expectations of academic behaviors to their children, as well as their support and encouragement, was an integral parent involvement activity that improved the overall academic success of the child (Easton, 2010; Jeynes, 2010). For some children, knowing their parents' expectations of them and knowing that they support them in their learning may be all the involvement they need to help them succeed in school. The discussions

and expectations may reinforce children's study habits while helping to develop the children's expectations for themselves.

These findings support Bempechat's (1992) contention that parent involvement is multidimensional – being strong in one area but weak in another. From the responses of the parents, it does not seem that parent involvement is uniform by either student or content area. Parents may provide more assistance to a child in a subject area where the parent feels more knowledgeable than in an area where they feel less knowledgeable. The fluctuation of parent involvement with a particular subject matter may not only reflect a parent's competence with the content of the subject, it may also reflect a parent's view that the child needs to develop self-regulation. Helping a child develop the trait of self-regulation may be the most important skill that a parent, knowingly or unknowingly, can help a child develop. This may be the main ability that enables children to develop habits that will promote academic and career success in life (Steinberg, 2014). Thus, the variance of parent involvement may reflect their desire to help their children develop self-regulatory behaviors deemed vital for their success.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF NONPROBABILITY SAMPLING

The study utilized nonprobability sampling as a cost and time efficient means to maximize the sample size. It is not possible with a nonprobability sample to calculate the degree of sampling error, impeding the ability to generalize the data created with accuracy (Rea & Parker, 2005). Because of its nonprobability, the study results cannot be applied to a larger population with a measure of precision. This creates a study that only describes the subjects sampled, preventing

the application of the findings to larger populations. The results only provide a snapshot of parenting practices of the specific sample under study.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC

The respondents surveyed were in the majority of the population: white, middle class, and female. It is not a diverse sample in terms of age, income, gender, or ethnicity. When providing their opinions on education and parent involvement, respondents' age, income, gender, and ethnicity may form the lens from which they view education. This infers their needs may differ from those younger parents who are struggling economically or those parents who come from a diverse racial background. Though not asked on the survey, this group may also reflect the largest number of homeowners. As such, the group may feel that they have the financial resources to help their children without getting involved as much with school. Their income may also have the effect of increasing their self-efficacy in all areas.

This age group may also have more experience raising children. The respondents indicated that 24 people in the age range of 41-50 had two children, 16 had three children, and 2 had four children. Forty-nine percent of all people surveyed were older parents with multiple children. Like anything else, parents who had had multiple children may have already built on their experiences in raising their first child. Mistakes that were made with earlier siblings may serve as learning opportunities for parents when it is a younger child. Parents may feel their self-efficacy as parents grow with each succeeding child they have, as they have had time to practice how to better work with their child on school assignments.

Given the commonalities among the respondents, it may be that they share similar response tendencies. If they believe that it is desirable to answer a question a certain way to not make them look bad, they may do so. This may have occurred with such responses as basic parenting and self-efficacy, where the responses overwhelming fell into extreme positive categories on the scale. If parents were not able to provide their children with basic tools needed for them to succeed in school or if they questioned their own efficacy, they may not have indicated as such for fear of negativity.

It would have been interesting to have younger parents with less experience and presumably, less financial resources respond to the questions to see if the level of parental self-efficacy and involvement differs at different stages of life. Their needs might be greater than those parents who have experience with raising children and who have had older children in school. Younger parents who have less experience may not benefit from the same social networks or financial resources the older parents have. This may result in these parents not knowing where to turn for support with school as their children become adolescents. Getting these parents' views on their own needs and involvement levels would benefit educators greatly in being able to target programs and resources to meet these parents' needs.

5.3.1 Limitations of Survey Responses

This study was affected by the amount of missing data from the respondents. Several people who reviewed the survey questions did not bother to complete the survey. Many other respondents dropped out from the survey as they progressed through the questions. The result was a small sample size. This affected the researcher's ability to conduct parametric tests for all variables of

self-efficacy and parental involvement, as the distribution of the responses for some survey questions was not normal. Non-parametric tests of assumption and analysis were used instead. Median splits were used in order to create dichotomous variables. These splits were derived from the answers where the highest frequency of responses fell. In areas with a skewed distribution, it created a median score that might have been different had a larger sample been studied.

In the creation of the composite parental involvement variable, dichotomous indicators were used to create the variable. All of these indicators were weighted equally, no one indicator was given more value than any other indicator. This weighting might not reflect the actual importance of that indicator in parent involvement practices. With the small size of the sample, it was not possible to determine whether some indicators may have more or less influence on the overall construct of parent involvement.

This research was also affected by the use of two different means of survey delivery: electronic and paper. The low response rate with the electronic survey questions the assumption that most parents have access to computers and can even access, let alone respond to, online surveys such as this one. More research may need to be done on the digital access and literacy of parents, particularly those in lower socioeconomic areas. There may be an assumption by educators that more people are connected via the internet and are reasonably able to use computers than is the case. This may also reflect the types of interactive parent involvement feasible in a district. Parent computer literacy may cause a division among those parents that are or are not digitally competent. This in turn may affect which types of interactive parent involvement activities are possible. If many parents are not able to use an online parent portal, it may negate parent participation from a significant portion of a school district's parent base. School districts

may need to determine how many of their parents are digitally literate so they can use online interactive resources to properly reach out to all components of their parent population.

5.4 WAYS TO IMPROVE RESEARCH ON TOPIC

The use of nonprobability sampling hindered the research in that the information gleaned from the survey cannot be generalized to larger populations. The data, though interesting, has limited applicable use as a result. If time and cost permit, the study would have benefitted from alternative sampling methods, such as a simple random and systemic random design where response probability can be calculated and bias be accounted for.

The study also suffered from the small sample size. From an initial figure of 107 who began or accessed the survey, often the number of people who responded to each question dropped to around 75 or so. This dropout rate affected the ability to run certain statistical tests for correlation among the variables and led to non-normal distribution rates. A survey on a larger sample would provide more in-depth information from a broader population and allow more types of analytic tests on the data to be run.

To gain a more diverse representation of population, it may be necessary to oversample. Regardless of the means of survey delivery, electronic or paper, it was difficult to get a diverse number of responses. This brings to question why the responses were so sparse among African-American and other minority residents. The feedback on parental involvement could be more representative of the overall populations of the school districts had more parents from diverse backgrounds completed the survey. Thus, the data gathered from this study may only reflect the

views of middle-class, white families. This does not provide needed data on parental involvement among minority families and may not provide enough insight to educators to develop parent involvement policies and practices to best meet the needs of all the parents served by the school based on this data.

This study utilized composite variables for parent involvement, self-efficacy, and SES. It may be that using composite variables creates a lack of specificity or a sense of vagueness on the part of respondents. Parents may be able to provide better information if the questions were more directed to a particular type of parent involvement in which they engage. Similarly, follow-up questions on a specific parent involvement activity would provide the researcher with more depth on a topic. For example, in the area helping students to study for a test, which types of tests are parents helping their children study for? Other questions may involve asking a parent their level of self-efficacy with helping a child with an algebra problem or writing a book report. Parents may be better able to define specific examples of self-efficacy than a general concept of the term. This definition may allow them to provide more thorough responses to questions on the topic than a general definition would alone.

Specificity may also have helped parents to better describe what they would have liked the school to do to help them improve their own self-efficacy with learning. If self-efficacy was not defined as a way for parents to gain confidence in their ability to master a task but as improvement in a way to facilitate parent involvement, parents may have responded with suggestions that are more specific. If parents know to make specific requests based upon extant specific behavior, future research may focus instead on these requests; establishing what parent involvement activities are undertaken by the parent and then asking parents what could the school do to help them build their self-efficacy in that particular area.

This study sought to develop composite variables of parent involvement, self-efficacy, and SES for the purposes of correlation. In so doing, it did not address some items that arose in the responses, like parent perceptions of their ability to help their child be successful with school work when compared to their teacher. The high frequency of the responses in Strongly Agree/Agree as well as the Neither Agree nor Disagree category suggest that this an area that may benefit from further study and follow-up questions that were not possible in this format. While it may be understandable in some content areas why parents may feel teachers are better able to help their children succeed than they are, it is curious as to why so many respondents were unsure of the ability of their own and their child's teacher to help their child. What factors are causing this uncertainty? The data was not able to answer this emergent question.

It may also be beneficial to utilize an experimental design where a specific type of parent involvement activity is implemented with an experimental group of parents as compared to a control group. Parental activity could be measured in terms of frequency and type. The researcher could then measure if the parent's self-efficacy with a specific type of learning activity influences the degree of parent involvement over time as the parent works to implement a specific strategy. This could give the researcher a sense of how much time may be needed for a parent to adopt a particular involvement activity when provided with supports to build self-efficacy.

This study could also be improved through the use of a focus group. The low response rate of individual questions of the survey impacted the ability of the researcher to measure both parent involvement and self-efficacy. A focus group would allow the researcher more access to the sample and would provide more immediate data on a particular parent involvement and self-efficacy development method. A focus group would also allow for more in-depth questioning and clarification of terms should parents need to ask. The creation of the focus group may also allow

for more diversity, and therefore more complex responses leading to a more nuanced perspective of the relationship between parent involvement and self-efficacy.

The data did not address the role that teachers play in fostering parent involvement. The open-ended responses raise questions about how parents perceive teachers willingness to help them. For every parent who responded that teachers were helpful and responsive, two parents indicated that the teachers were uncaring and non-responsive. As indicated by Anderson and Minke (2007), teacher requests for involvement have a strong impact on whether parents become involved with school. It may be with teachers that cultural barriers exist as to when or how they respond to parents. As secondary teachers may tend to be more content centered then student centered, there may be an expectation among the teachers that older students should learn to be more independent as they mature. This, in turn, may influence the frequency and type of contact teachers make with parents at this grade level.

Teachers may also face organizational or contractual barriers regarding parent communication. Individual collective bargaining agreements may have language that delineates the teacher's obligations to contact a parent and post grades. This language would have to be modified to establish procedures and set guidelines for the establishment of parent online portals and online communication. School district policies may also need to be adjusted to establish procedures for teachers on how and when to communicate with parents. If the policy goal is for teachers to be more responsive and accessible to parents, educators must ask themselves how that will affect the school day and what parameters need to be established that balance the need to increase parent involvement and the need to have reasonable expectations for teachers.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The study suggests that parents are more active with their children's learning at the secondary level than they may be given credit for by educators. Unlike younger children at the elementary level, parents at the secondary level often do not come in to class for activities such as story time or to help chaperone a class trip to the farm. As such, their involvement is not always on view for the teacher. Much of the work at the elementary school level assigned is easily within the cognitive functioning of the parent. This may allow the parent to be more frequently involved with the child helping with homework. This is not always the case with secondary assignments, which may be more complex in subjects that the parent may not have the expertise needed to help the child with work. Instead of helping the child solve problems or complete work in these areas, the parent support at the secondary level may take the form of establishing their expectations for good grades, setting parameters for study, and discussing school with their child. These activities may be as effective in supporting adolescents with academics as hands-on intervention with work may be for supporting younger students in elementary school.

Several factors associated with the development of the child may influence the type of involvement that the parents engage in. The responses from the open-ended questions suggest that parent involvement takes place in many forms and contexts. The Harvard Family Research Center (2010) described parent engagement as a shared responsibility among families, community organizations, and schools. They further noted that the involvement is continuous throughout a child's life and that it occurs in multiple settings and contexts in which children grow and learn (Harvard Family Research Center, 2010). The parents from this sample may not have undertaken the same parental involvement activities as outlined in Joyce Epstein's (1986) research indicates,

but they are no less engaged in the learning of their children. The parent responses infer that parents adjust the frequency and type of engagement with the specific needs of their child. Much of this engagement takes place outside of the brick and mortar structure of school and may not be apparent to the teachers. Hence, many high school teachers may not believe the parents are as engaged with their children as they were when those children were at the elementary school.

Unlike an elementary school child, an adolescent is trying to establish his or her independence from the parent. At the same time, parents may try to give the adolescent opportunities to develop independence and responsibility as part of growing up. In this sense, the parent may not become involved directly with class learning when they can see that the child is able to handle the responsibility of getting the work done on his or her own. However, this may differ among siblings, dependent upon who needs more supervision. Parents indicated that the frequency and type of involvement not only differs by child, but may differ by assignment. Unlike parents of elementary students, parents may not see a need to check homework on a daily basis if their child is a good student and is already getting good grades. The frequency of checking homework grades by parents seems to increase based upon the performance of the child. The frequency increases if the child struggles and may decrease if the child's grades improve.

It is the ability to be able to check student grades and to be able to communicate with teachers that the parents seem to desire. In the open-ended response section of the survey, parents overwhelmingly indicated that they monitored their children's work almost daily through the use of online grade portals like Edline. This ability enabled them to keep pace with their children's work. Parents not only want to know what assignments are due, but also what tests they need to prepare for. They would also like to receive more of an explanation of grades and assignments rather than a single letter grade. Online grading portals may leave some parents confused. One

parent noted, “It is difficult to tell if there is a “0” on an assignment or if it is a missing assignment or if the teacher has not graded them yet.” Parents who believe that they have difficulty reading school reports may not feel efficacious enough to know what to question or to follow up on. This, in turn, could have a negative influence on their level of parental involvement. Educators may want to acknowledge that parents may have some confusion with reading reports that are sent home and may seek to provide clarification as a way to improve communication and involvement.

In fact, the improvement of communication in terms of means and frequency may serve as a way to improve parental self-efficacy with learning activities. The Harvard Family Research Center (2010) described parent engagement as an interactive, cooperative process between the school and the parent. For those parents who are not familiar with all the mechanisms and processes of school, they may not know what questions to ask of a teacher or what language to use. They may not know what they may be entitled to ask of a teacher or to know about their child’s performance. Not knowing what to ask or what may be known can actually decrease a parent’s self-efficacy with learning, as the parent may feel he or she doesn’t have the capability to assist his or her child to learn. As one parent responded “I can nag about homework, but I can’t control class work.” Increased communication can help the parent to regain and maintain control in that area. In this sense, communication not only helps disseminate knowledge and concerns between the school and home, but it can provide the parent the framework to better support the teacher in the class. It may be necessary for teachers to assume the role of a coach with parents to teach them the skills they need to become better supporters of children’s learning (Paredes, 2011). Schools can help by finding ways to foster that communication and help parents to reach out to teachers. They can develop tip sheets to guide conversations between the educators and the home. Structures could be devised to help parents increase their ability to partner with teachers to set

academic and behavioral goals for their children, thus increasing the quality and quantity of interaction (Paredes, 2011). Teachers may also need to realize the vital role they play in helping parents to develop their own self-efficacy. In the survey, many parents noted that the teachers were not cooperative and were unresponsive to their needs. The following two quotes from parents indicate the level of frustration some feel when they perceive that they are being ignored by teachers:

There are situations where our child has not turned in any assignments for two weeks with no contact from the school. I have to contact teachers; they do not reach out. I have been told by more than one teacher: “this is not elementary school; if the students choose not to do their work, that’s their choice.”

Parents who receive these types of responses from teachers regarding the academic progress of their child may perceive the teachers as people who do not really have the individual student as the focus of their work. If a teacher projects an image of unresponsiveness and unfeeling, the parent may reciprocate that view against the teacher, further driving a wedge between any cooperative effort between the school and the home. This becomes counterproductive in that educating and preparing students for the world of work and learning is a joint effort between parent and teacher.

If educators are to develop parent involvement programs that seek to build parental self-efficacy as a means of increasing parental involvement, then they may want to train their teachers to recognize the forms that parent involvement may take at the secondary level as compared to the forms that parent involvement takes at the elementary level. They may also want to stress to teachers that providing information to parents about upcoming student assignments and quizzes does not abrogate the expectation that older students take responsibility for their education, but helps the parent to better support the teacher while supervising the student at home.

Schools can help parents prepare for parent-teacher conferences. Question sheets can be created that can serve as a template for parents to use when meeting with teachers to examine their child's progress. By giving parents a template to follow, the school can help the parent build his or her own self-efficacy for helping their child with learning activities.

Another theme that arose from the open-ended responses is the influence of the will of the adolescent. Many parents indicated that their children did not want them to help them. There may be several reasons that adolescents do not want their parents to help them with their work. Some adolescents may feel that they do not need any help, and they may be right. Others may be trying to establish their independence from their parents by accomplishing tasks on their own. Some students may be hiding their work from their parents, out of embarrassment of low performance. Still others may be rebelling against their parents. In any case, unlike elementary students, the willful refusal of parental help with class work may affect the frequency and type of involvement. For these cases, the school may want to provide parents with information on how to better understand the adolescent need for independence. Many parents may not know how to respond to their child in these scenarios, whether to leave them to their own devices or to insist on intervening when the child refuses.

The parent respondents indicated that when their child does not need or want them to help, then the parent withdraws altogether from helping the student. Steinberg (2014) suggested that adolescents seeking ways to develop independence may be doing so as part of their identity development. Thus, withdrawing from an adolescent's academic course work may not be advantageous for the student. Without being intrusive, a parent could help a child with schoolwork by providing support for work in a scaffolding approach that establishes supports for the child while pushing the child to achieve goals just beyond the child's current ability. The parent could

provide feedback and suggestions to work the student has completed, without imposing total control over the project. This scaffolding would help the adolescent to develop self-regulating behavior as he or she develops both identity and independence (Steinberg, 2014).

The school could provide resources for these parents to help them to better understand adolescent behavior and development. This could help the parent to not only recognize how certain actions by their children may be a normal part of adolescence, but it could also help parents to develop a strategy on how to work with an adolescent to help assume self-regulation, responsibility, identity, and independence without abandoning their own involvement with the child. These resources could take the form of parenting sessions in the evenings to brochures on adolescent behavior to even a checklist of positive ways parents can help their teenager to succeed in school.

5.6 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Parents continue to be involved with their children's learning activities at the secondary level. However, as the course material becomes more complex, the level and degree of involvement changes. This does not mean that parents are not active with their children, it means that the activity has shifted more from direct activities to indirect ones. Because these activities are indirect, it is vital for parent to seek out even more contact with the teacher and to be able to monitor his or her child's grades. Educators can do more to recognize this need and to find ways to improve communication between home and school, including the opportunity to monitor grades online. From the responses provided by parents, it would seem that they look to the school to provide leadership and initiative in supplying these communication forums. Educators need to

recognize the importance to student success of a parent's setting of expectations for academic good grades and good behavior, discussions of college and career, and monitoring of student academic progress. These involvement activities all play integral roles in helping students succeed. Educators may benefit from determining how parents in their own districts interact with their adolescent children and provide materials to them to facilitate those interactions.

While self-efficacy, SES, and parent involvement may not have been found to correlate, it is important to remember that schools have the potential to help all parents improve their own ability to help their children improve in school. Schools can engage parents to determine what their needs are and then can provide formats and forums to align services with demand. Establishing the means of communication may be integral to improving that engagement. If parents are unsure of what to ask teachers in conferences, schools can provide scripted questions. If parents need more access to grades, schools can provide online grading and parent portals. If parents need multiple platforms with which to communicate with teachers, and perhaps each other, schools can provide those platforms as well. In this way, schools can tailor their services to parents' needs. In so doing, the relationship between parents and school could become less of the parent responding to the directives of the teacher and more of an equal partnership of parent and teacher working together to help the student reach his or her goals.

The data from this study, while not able to be generalized, could serve as the initial phase for future research. Rea and Parker (2005) note that the primary advantage of nonprobability sampling rests in its usefulness in the preliminary stages of a research project. The data from this study could serve as starting point for similar studies on parent involvement and self-efficacy. The sample could also serve as the basis to develop a focus group or implement a qualitative study on this topic. Future research on how parents are involved with their children at the secondary level

and the role their own self-efficacy may play in their decision making process for involvement may continue to be useful to administrators who are seeking to improve the quantity and quality of parent involvement programs.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

THE EFFECT OF SELF-EFFICACY ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

The Effect of Self-Efficacy on Parental Involvement at the High School Level Parent
Questionnaire Survey Procedures

Dear Parents, My name is Gary Peiffer and I am a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh. I also serve as Superintendent for the Carlynton School District serving the communities of Carnegie, Rosslyn Farms, and Crafton, Pennsylvania. I am working on a research project that studies how parents are involved with their tenth grade child's learning and what influences that involvement. This research can help schools improve their own parent involvement policies and practices in order to better serve their communities. This survey asks tenth grade parents questions about their involvement with their high school children and their school. It also measures the level of confidence parents have with providing help to their children. Educators will use information obtained from this survey to improve their understanding of parent involvement, so as to develop effective parent involvement programs. Your participation is voluntary. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study. You may refuse to complete the survey or quit taking the survey at any time. You may also skip questions. However, in order to gain a better understanding of parent involvement at the high school level, I hope that you answer as many questions as you can. Your confidentiality will be maintained. Survey results will be reported as a whole. Individual results will not be reported. Survey data and results will be kept in a secure room in a locked file cabinet. A parent or guardian of a tenth grade student should complete this questionnaire. The parent or guardian who completes this survey should be familiar with the child's current school situation and educational goals. The questionnaire is being distributed in both electronic and paper formats. If you are completing this in an electronic format, please follow the directions on the computer screen. If you are completing this in a paper format, please complete the questionnaire and return it in the postage paid envelope provided. Please read each question carefully. This questionnaire asks different types of questions. On most, you will be asked to select one response only. On others, you may be asked to mark one response for each line or to answer a question with a few sentences. Your answers will help me to gain a better understanding of parent involvement at the high school level. Thank you for your participation. As a reminder, your participation is purely voluntary and you may skip a question or quit the survey at any time.

Please use a pen with blue or black ink to complete this questionnaire:

Please identify your child's school: _____

For the questions below, please select one item from the list of possible choices

Q1 Please read the following descriptions and then choose the one that best describes your situation

- ☐ You are the child's parent (biological or adoptive) and you are married/living with the child's other parent (biological or adoptive) (1)
- ☐ You are the child's parent (biological or adoptive) and you are married/living with someone other than the child's other parent (biological or adoptive) (2)
- ☐ You are an adult family member (adult sibling, aunt, uncle) living with one of the biological parents of the child (3)
- ☐ You are the child's parent (biological or adoptive) and there is no other parent/guardian in the household (4)
- ☐ You are a grandparent (biological or adoptive) and are raising the child (5)
- ☐ You are a foster parent raising the child (6)

Q2 Please choose the item that best describes how many children are in the house

- ☐ One child (1)
- ☐ Two children (2)
- ☐ Three children (3)
- ☐ Four children (4)
- ☐ Five or more children (5)

Q3 Please select the item that describes your gender

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)

Q4 Please select the number range that best describes your age

- ☐ 18-20 (1)
- ☐ 21-30 (2)
- ☐ 31-40 (3)
- ☐ 41-50 (4)
- ☐ 51-60 (5)
- ☐ Over 60 (6)

Q5 Please select one or more of the following items that best describes you

- ☐ African-American (1)
- ☐ Asian American (2)
- ☐ Hispanic American (3)
- ☐ Multi-racial (4)
- ☐ Native American (5)
- ☐ Pacific Islander (6)
- ☐ South Asian American (7)
- ☐ White (8)

Q6 Please select the response that best answers the following: Is your child eligible to receive payment for a free or reduced price lunch?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q7 Please choose the item that best represents your family income.

- ☐ Up to \$25,000 (1)
- ☐ \$25,000-\$50,000 (2)
- ☐ \$50,000-\$75,000 (3)
- ☐ \$75,000-\$100,000 (4)
- ☐ \$100,000-\$125,000 (5)
- ☐ \$125,000-\$150,000 (6)
- ☐ \$150,000-\$200,000 (7)
- ☐ Over \$200,000 (8)

Q8 Please select the item that best describes the level of schooling you completed.

- ☐ Some high school (1)
- ☐ High School Diploma/GED (2)
- ☐ Post-Secondary School (3)
- ☐ Associate Degree (4)
- ☐ Bachelor Degree (5)
- ☐ Master Degree (6)
- ☐ Doctoral Degree (7)
- ☐ Post-doctoral studies (8)

Q9 Please select the item that best reflects your point of view:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Disagree or Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I can master a new skill if I get to practice it myself (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am comfortable trying new activities (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can help my child get better grades (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will keep working on a hard job even if I have to struggle to complete it (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will take on a new challenge if I am encouraged (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will try a new task if someone shows me how to do it (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe my child's teachers are better able to help my child with school work than I am (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the questions below, please select the answer that best describes your situation

Q10 My child has the following at home to use for completing school work

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Pencil or Pen (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing Paper (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dictionary (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home Computer (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Calculator (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quiet area to study (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 How often do you communicate with your child's or children's teacher(s) about the following items:

	Never (1)	Once or twice a month (2)	Weekly (3)	Daily (4)
My child's grades (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Homework questions (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child's behavior (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Study reminders/tips (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child's attendance (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 During the school year, how often do you discuss the following items with your 10th grade child or children?

	Never (1)	Once or twice a month (2)	Weekly (3)	Daily (4)
Your expectations for good grades (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choices of classes (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations of behavior (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being on time (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career choices (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13 During the school year, how often would you say you help your child with the following:

	Never (1)	Once or twice a month (2)	Weekly (3)	Daily (4)
Study for a test (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Check homework (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write a report (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practice vocabulary (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading a difficult paragraph (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Find Information (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operate a computer (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 Do you participate in any of the following groups at your child's high school?

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Not Offered (3)
School Principal Advisory Council (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Secondary Education Committee with Teachers (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Governance Committee (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Student Activity Committee (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15 Do you do any of the following activities at your child's high school:

	Yes (4)	No (5)	Not Offered (6)
Belong to a parent-teacher group+ (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belong to a sports booster group (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belong to a band/music booster group (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer in class as a teacher helper (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chaperone school events (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend parent-teacher conferences (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please answer the following questions as you wish

Q16 How would you describe your involvement with your child's education in high school?

Q17 What does your child's school do to help you to be involved with your child's learning?

Q18 What can the school do to help you increase your involvement with your child's learning that it is currently not doing?

Q24 THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY AND COMPLETING THIS SURVEY! For completing the survey, your name will be entered into a drawing for a VISA gift card. This card can be used anywhere that accepts VISA and is provided through the University of Pittsburgh's We Pay system. If you would like to be entered into a drawing for a \$25.00, \$50.00, or \$100.00 VISA gift card, please provide your contact information below. This information will be separated from the other information you provided before any data will be entered into the computer. Names will be drawn at random. Winners will be notified by phone or email.

Last Name: _____
First Name: _____
Street Address: _____
Town, State, Zip Code: _____
Home Telephone Number: _____
Cell Phone Number: _____
Email Address: _____

Returning the Survey: This survey was distributed through electronic and paper formats. Please mail your completed survey to Gary Peiffer at 435 Kings Highway, Carnegie, PA 15106 with the enclosed envelope. Please seal the envelope and drop it in the mail. If you have any questions regarding the survey or the study, please contact Gary Peiffer at 412-429-2500, ext. 1102 or at GDP9@pitt.edu. Thank you again for all of your help with this study!

APPENDIX B

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 15: *Demographic Characteristics for the Overall Sample (N = 107)*

Characteristic	Frequency	Valid %
Gender		
Female	68	80.0
Male	17	20.0
Age		
18-20	2	2.3
21-30	2	2.3
31-40	12	14.0
41-50	47	54.7
51-60	23	26.7
Educational attainment		
Some high school	3	3.5
High school diploma / GED	23	27.1
Post-secondary education	13	15.3
Associate degree	12	14.1
Bachelor degree	27	31.8
Master degree	7	8.2
Children in household		
One	15	17.7
Two	47	55.3
Three	20	23.5
Four	3	3.5
Household dynamic		
Two parents	59	68.6
Parent and partner	14	16.3
Single parent	13	15.1
Household income		
< \$25,000	10	11.9
\$25,000-50,000	16	19.0
\$50,000-75,000	19	22.6
\$75,000-100,000	23	27.4
\$100,000-125,000	8	9.5
> \$125,000	8	9.5
Free/reduced lunch eligible (SES)		
Yes (Low SES)	24	28.2
No (High SES)	61	71.8

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

Memorandum

To:

Gary Peiffer

From:

Christopher Ryan PhD, Vice Chair

Date:

9/27/2013

IRB#:

PRO13030505

Subject:

The effect of parental self-efficacy on parental involvement with their children's learning at the secondary level

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board.

Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Please note the following information:

If any modifications are made to this project, use the "Send Comments to IRB Staff" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.

Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "Study Completed" report from the project workspace. Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

Figure 11. IRB approval.

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